

Worship Vineyard Style

Rich Nathan

February 2-3, 2002

Worship: Worship as a Lifestyle Series

2 Samuel 6:1-23

I've been doing a series on worship here that I've called "Worship as a Lifestyle." Part of the reason I wanted to reintroduce the subject of worship is because we have several thousand new people here at Vineyard. Many of you really do not understand very much about who we are and what it is that we are attempting to do as a church.

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

Particularly some of you, who are newer, may be looking around as all of this singing is happening during the first part of our service, and you notice that a few people have their hands up. Perhaps down your aisle or in the aisle in front of you, you notice that someone may be crying or is tearing up. You may even have noticed on occasion that a few people are getting a little emotional.

Now, I assume, especially if you are a guest—if you are not used to a church service like this, that some of what you are seeing around you might be a little strange to you. It might make you feel a little uncomfortable. It is definitely new. You don't quite understand why Vineyard is doing what they are doing. And so, I feel a need to explain. I always find it helpful to have things explained to me that I can understand. It is sort of like being invited over to somebody's house who comes from a different culture than you do. You have been invited over for dinner and some of the dishes are a little strange. It is kind of nice to know, as they are serving you this new Arabic dish or this new Japanese dish, what it is that you are eating. Why do they like it so much? How do you eat it? Well, I would like to do the same thing in terms of our worship.

I have called today's talk *Worship Vineyard-Style* because if you attempt to put the Vineyard on a map of contemporary churches, you are going to find that we don't quite fit in most of the categories that people are used to fitting churches in. We are not a traditional church. We are not really a high church like the Episcopalians or Roman Catholics or Lutherans.

We do not, at first glance, appear to be charismatic or Pentecostal. People who come to the Vineyard are surprised that there doesn't seem to be some of the outward trappings that they may equate with Pentecostalism or the charismatic movement. Here at the Vineyard we do believe in all of the biblical gifts of the Holy Spirit and we do practice them. We believe in prophecy, healing, and the spiritual gift of tongues.

But the way that I like to explain it is that we are thoroughly charismatic in our practice of spiritual gifts, but we are not charismatic or Pentecostal in our style. Our style, particularly what people observe in our public worship, is more laid back. It is a little more accessible to newcomers. It is not quite as, and I say this with all affection, but it is not quite as weird as some churches with similar beliefs to us.

Here at Vineyard, we've spent a lot of time attempting to carefully teach God's Word. I deeply believe in the life-changing power of the Word of God as it is studied and read by you and as it is preached. Over the course of a year, I receive several hundred emails from individuals telling me about how their lives are being changed by God's Word.

But we are not like some conservative evangelical churches that some of you are coming from. Though the church you may be coming from teaches God's Word, very often your experience may have been that there is far less of a free flow of music and singing. There is, perhaps, in some of your church backgrounds a very limited role for the Holy Spirit's activity, and almost no place for emotion or any display of emotion in worship.

Now, the message I want to do today is one I have given before about 7 years ago. It is a very rare thing for me to repeat messages I've preached in the past. I generally do it about once a year or once every two years. I really like the freshness of a message that has come right out of the oven of my most recent study. But this message from 2 Samuel 6 I think is an important one for the thousands of

newcomers who are here as well as for those of you who are veterans of the church and have gotten some of our basics. You always need reminders. I love 2 Samuel 6 because I think that it communicates what it is that we are trying to do in the Vineyard about as well as any chapter that I know of in the Bible.

Let me give you a couple of ways to outline the chapter and then we are going to look at it specifically section by section. OK? So let me give you a chapter breakdown and then we will look at the specific parts.

2 Samuel 6, verses 1-11, you could call “Worship When its Wrong.” And then verses 12-23, “Worship When its Right.” 1-11—“Worship When its Wrong”; 12-23—“Worship When its Right.” Another way to break the verse down would be to say verses 1-11 are “When Your Relationship With God Has Gone Sour” and verses 12-23, “When Your Relationship With God Has Been Healed.” Let me give you another breakdown and then I am going to be applying these, so don’t fret if you can’t remember it all. Verses 1-11, I would say is a “Strong Warning to the charismatic” and verses 12-23 is God’s “Strong Warning to Conservative Evangelicals.” Let me say that again. Verses 1-11 is a strong warning to the charismatic. And verses 12-23 is a strong warning from God to the conservative evangelicals.

Now, in my particular case I have a real problem because I have a foot in both worlds. One of my feet is in the charismatic world and the other is in the conservative evangelical world. Consequently, as I preach this message I am getting hit by trains going in both directions. I have in my mouth the double-barrel shotgun. About 5-6

years ago I actually wrote a book describing this position of having a foot in both the charismatic world and the evangelical world. I called it *Empowered Evangelicals*. If you are interested in where I'm coming from theologically, where this church is coming from, you might want to pick up *Empowered Evangelicals*. We have lots of copies in the bookstore.

Verses 1-11 are the warning to the charismatics. Verses 12-23 are the warning, God's strong warning, to the conservative evangelicals. I've called today's talk, *Worship Vineyard-Style*.

We are going to read verses 1-11. Let me give you the scene. First of all, we have this extraordinary celebration [keep in your mind, this is God's warning to the charismatic]. You have this great celebration happening. In verse 5, David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord with songs, harps, lyres, tambourines and sistrums.

You know, I never knew what a sistrum was. I always imagined in my mind's eye that it was a really cool saxophone, which is one of my favorite instruments. And that someone in David's party was sort of wailing away on the sax. He's got sunglasses on and is playing it bluesy style. Unfortunately, I mentioned my speculation regarding the sistrum at a seminary where I was teaching a year ago. One of the seminary professors completely destroyed my little fantasy of the sistrum as being like a saxophone. He Xeroxed a few encyclopedia articles on the sistrum and handed them to me 10 minutes after I was finished teaching. Seminary professors live for

moments like that. The sistrum is either some sort of ancient rattle, like a big baby rattle, or it is like castanets. But in any case, it is some sort of percussion instrument. Just thought you'd like to know...

But I imagined this worship service where the music is really hot and people are dancing. They are raising their hands and singing. They are celebrating and having a blast. It is some gigantic party like Mardi Gras. People are cheering and some folks are crying. Folks are kneeling and some are laid out prostrate on the floor – like the ultimate renewal service.

And then, all of a sudden, verse 6 they come to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reaches out and takes hold of the Ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The Lord's anger burns against him because of his irreverent act. And God strikes him down and he dies there. You talk about throwing a wet towel over something. You talk about quenching the spirit. What is going on here? Why do I say that this is appropriate to apply to the charismatic and Pentecostals as a warning of the danger we could fall into?

So, here we have the people celebrating and dancing and singing and shouting, having a grand old time, Uzzah reaches out when the Ark that was on the cart stumbled. He reaches out and touches the Ark to steady it up and he is killed. This is one of those very difficult passages in the bible because people say, "Hey, I don't get this at all. What is so wrong, so terrible?"

Again, why do I say that this is God's warning to the Pentecostals or the charismatic? See, as we exercise our liberty in the spirit, and as churches begin to explore the spiritual gifts, there is a tendency [and you see this tendency in the New Testament, for example, in the Corinthian letters], there is a tendency for churches to dismiss God's word and the things that God lays out about the proper way to do things. There is a tendency to say that all of that is old and legalistic. We are now people of the spirit and we are not subject to this rigid word and written things and the bible. Like the Corinthians—already filled; already rich; already we reign. We now have the Holy Spirit and we can pretty much do what we feel free to do. That was Uzzah's problem.

You know, God specifically commanded back in the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament, the first five books of Moses, he specifically commanded the priests regarding the appropriate way to transport the Ark of the Covenant. And he said to the priests that he didn't want the Ark on a cart. He wanted the Ark of the Covenant to be put on poles. There were rings that were attached to the Ark and he wanted poles slipped through those rings and he wanted the Ark to be carried on the shoulders of the priests.

He also said that no one was to touch the Ark or even to go near it, except once a year. That day was the Day of Atonement and that was with certain offerings and sacrifices. No cart. The priests should carry it on their shoulders and they shouldn't go near it except once a year on the Day of Atonement. Certainly never touch it.

But you know, when you are having a great time and you are enjoying yourself with God, it is easy to become overly familiar with God and to play fast and loose with the

commandments. You begin to say to yourself, “Well, God obviously doesn’t care so much about this because we are having so much fun here. It is so enjoyable. Whatever God laid down in his book, that’s not so important anymore.

Friends, there is a real danger in celebration, and in particular, in being a recipient of extravagant outpourings of the Spirit. The danger is that you begin to believe that God doesn’t care so much about your whole-hearted obedience to him. If he did, he wouldn’t be pouring out his Spirit the way he is in your life and through your life. You wouldn’t be seeing the kind of spiritual effects, conversions, healings, deliverances, if God was really displeased with you.

Jesus warns us about the danger of confusing your spiritual impact with your spiritual acceptability before God. In Matthew 7 he says, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of heaven. But only he who does the will of my Father, who is in heaven. Many people will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ And I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me you evil doers.’”

I’ve always taken that text to be a strong warning to us in the charismatic movement. You can participate in great worship and lift your hands to the sky, dance and sing, and prophesy and feel the presence of God. But in your heart of hearts you can be so drifting from the Lord and from whole-hearted obedience to the Lord that there comes a point when God pulls the plug. As I’ve said to you throughout this series, friends, is that worship is something that comes from the heart. It is the heart

response to the revelation of God, not just our enjoyment of a moment, or the spiritual buzz we get in great worship celebrations.

Let me shift gears here for a moment and point out a second danger for charismatic. You know, when we enjoy God there is a tendency to become overly familiar with God. Some of you probably don't know this, but Uzzah grew up in the presence of the Ark of God. The Ark of God was kept in his father, Abinadab's, house. He saw the Ark every day growing up. What an amazing thing to be a little boy crawling on the floor and there, perhaps protected, but there in the corner you know there is the Ark of God. You are rolling your little ball in front of it.

And the warning here is really not only for the charismatic, but for lots of us the danger of over familiarity with God. Let me try to bring this down for you and apply it to a couple of concrete situations.

You know, Uzzah is a model of second-generation Christians. You grow up and God is just assumed. You are always at church. Your parents are always reading the Bible. Maybe you go to a Christian school. But your whole life you are around talk about Christ, God, church and worship. But here is the second-generation Christian syndrome. You don't know, at least when you are a child, what first generation Christians know – the real awfulness of life without God and the real difficulty of breaking free from sin patterns that get established when you are young and carry over even into the Christian life. You don't know how much fight it takes and how

hard it is to heal from wounds created by sin. You don't have any fear that you may struggle with a problem your whole life.

To bring this down even further, very often second generation Christians like Uzzah, who becomes overly familiar with God, do not have a sufficient fear of sin, nor a sufficient fear of God. So you begin to play around. As a teenager or young adult, you play around. You say, "I know God. I've grown up around God, church, and worship, around Christ. I won't be scarred by sin. I won't find myself in places of bondage or addiction. I'm just having a good time. Besides, God is always loving and forgiving. My parents told me that and I've always heard that in Sunday School – God is always loving and forgiving."

But somewhere along the line, second generation Christian, charismatic, Uzzah, you forgot that God is also holy. He is the God of Hebrews 12, a consuming fire. That God does discipline us, and life apart from God is really miserable. When we walk away from God, we bring on ourselves all kinds of pain and wounding, and sorrow. When we walk away from God and make compromises, we bring sorrow to lots of other people. That is the danger of over familiarity with God.

Does any of this speak to any of you?

OK, let's move on and look at David's reaction because I think that there is another application of this passage that I don't want you to miss. It says in verse 8 that David was angry because of the Lord's wrath that was taken out on Uzzah. In verse 9 David

was afraid of the Lord and said, “How can the Ark of God ever come to me? He was not willing to take the Ark of the Lord to be with him in the city of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite and the Ark of the Lord remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months.”

Here is David’s emotional reaction to what he observed as he looked at the judgment of God. In verse 8 he became angry. In verse 9 he became afraid. In verses 10 and 11 he pulled back, he withdrew from the presence of God. Now, certainly all of this is taking place in the context of worship. But we might broaden the interpretation of this passage to life in general and say that what we are faced with here in the beginning part of chapter 6 is a tremendously disillusioning experience in life for David. Here he thinks that he is serving God. He is going to be the one to lead the Ark of God back to Jerusalem because he knows that that is ultimately where God wants the Ark. And his heart is in the right place. He wants to follow God. What he is doing is for the Lord.

And then this incredible disillusioning event occurs and as a result David gets angry and afraid and withdraws from the presence of God. I see the process occur very, very often in people’s lives as we are attempting to do something with a pretty decent heart. At least we think we have a pretty decent heart. We are attempting to do something for God or for our church, to assist somebody else and then it turns out disastrously. Something terrible happens.

For example, I have known people who have been involved in various kinds of para-church ministries, working for campus houses, and half-way houses and oversees missions of some kind. And somewhere along the line they get a call or they are spoken to and told, basically, that their funding is cut off. There is no more money for what they are doing, or they have been replaced, or there is some type of cut-back and that's it, they are gone. I have seen people fired from churches. That's it, you are gone.

But even beyond church, there are so many utterly mysterious experiences in life. You are being faithful, at least to the best of your understanding. You serve and you give. The one thing you really want is to have a child, but you can't get pregnant. Or you get pregnant after years of trying and you suffer a miscarriage. Or you have a child born with a severe birth defect. Or your child has an accident. Or grows up and begins to use drugs.

Or, perhaps, the secret desire of your heart is to get married. And you go through one broken relationship with a man or woman after another. Or there seems to be virtually no one around you that is marriageable.

Or you are faithfully serving God at your work, at least to the best of your ability, and you get laid off. You get stabbed in the back.

What I am saying is that many, many of you have been like David. You were serving God and you were really attempting to do the right thing and then suddenly the rug is

pulled out from under you. Your reaction is one of anger toward God or one of fear and withdrawal. You begin to say, “You know, somehow as a result of this deep wound, my confidence in God’s goodness and my confidence in God’s person has been deeply shaken. God is no longer what I thought he was. He is really mysterious to me. I thought that he was my friend. I thought, certainly, that he was going to be my protector. And now I see that he really isn’t my friend and that he isn’t my protector.”

We pull ourselves away from the presence of God. “That is enough. I am never going to put myself in that type of vulnerable position again. I am going to take my heart away from God and seal it up somehow. Oh, I might be with other church people, but not like I was—not crazy in love with God, willing to take risks, to move, to change jobs, to go overseas.”

Gordon MacDonald, who is a pastor who went through some difficult times himself, calls what I have been describing as “broken world experiences.” Some of you have had your world broken, especially with God. You have had a broken world experience. I can honestly see that in myself. I will describe one of my broken world experiences in a moment. And in the course of MacDonald’s book on restoring your broken world, he makes the interesting point that most of the people of God in the bible, most leaders, have had these broken world experiences in their lives. You see it certainly with Moses who thought he was serving God by striking down the Egyptian at the beginning of Moses’ ministry. It ends up that he gets caught and as a result he has to flee Egypt and spends 40 years in the desert.

Certainly one of the reasons for disillusioning experiences is at times we have too high a view of ourselves and this broken world experience shows us who we really are. See, for many of us we have known a lot of success. You might be a person who has done well in school, done well in athletics, maybe you have a good job and are making a lot of money. You feel God's blessing on your life and you can get a warped perception of yourself and think, "Well, I am a really good person. I must be somewhat invulnerable. Everything I touch gets blessed."

Then your house shakes and the roof caves in on your head and you come to a place of saying, "I guess I didn't know myself very well."

But you know, however much you think and analyze your particular broken world experience (why it happened, how much responsibility do you have, how much responsibility does this other person have, how much is just life in a fallen world, how much is demonic attack) however much you introspect and analyze what's happening in your life, these emotions of anger, fear, and withdrawal are still present.

I've had this experience in my own life on a number of occasions when God became for me a mysterious being. Some years ago, and I've told this story before, but some years ago I prayed for a little girl here who was dying of leukemia. I was praying for her and laying my hands on her stomach and asking God to heal her. I went over to her house a couple of times a week just asking God's provision for her and for his healing.

And then, through some weird circumstances, I ended up in the hospital myself. While I was in the hospital she stopped getting prayed for and on television one evening while I was laid-up in my hospital bed, the announcer said, “We have some tragic news for you tonight.” He mentioned her name and said that she died this morning of leukemia. When I saw that on television, I had a broken world experience. I just began to weep in my bed and ask, “Why?”

David’s reaction really made sense to me. I was angry at God. I had been faithful. I did what I thought God wanted me to do. I was seeing results. I became afraid and I withdrew. Over the next 3-4 months I said, “I am not going to pray for anybody. This is silly.” Why should I pray for somebody who has a headache when this little girl died and I had to do a 7-year old’s funeral. “I don’t want this kind of ministry. I don’t want to be involved in this kind of thing anymore. I am tired of this.” So I understand broken world experiences.

And I see, though, that people who know God can’t stay away forever. It says in verse 12, “Now, King David was told, ‘The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has because of the Ark of God.’ So David went down and he brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the city of David with rejoicing. When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf.”

Let's take a look at this from a perspective of vulnerable relationship with God and then we are going to move on to the perspective of worship. From the perspective of a relationship with God and broken world experiences, I don't believe that somebody can stay away from God forever who really knows and has tasted God. I don't believe somebody can stay away from God forever.

See, I think to myself, "What kind of guarantees did David get that the same thing that happened to Uzzah wouldn't happen again?" If he tried drawing near to God again and tried to do God's will, the same thing could happen again. What kind of guarantees did he get? None. After a broken world experience how do you know that you are not going to get burned again? What kind of guarantees will God give you if you really put yourself back in ministry and take a risk and say, "OK, I will totally surrender again to you like I did 5 or 10 years ago?"

The answer is none. Why should you do it? Because you come to a place where you see blessing on someone else and you want that blessing. David was standing on the outside looking in and he saw blessing on the household of Obed-Edom. Anybody who has tasted the blessing of God and is standing on the outside, say to themselves, "That is what I want in my life again. Nothing else satisfies. Nothing." Business doesn't satisfy and money doesn't satisfy. Normal church life doesn't satisfy. Academic honors don't satisfy. Nothing else satisfies when you have tasted the blessing of God in your life. When you see it in a place, you are drawn back to it and say, "I want that again. I am starving for God. This time I am going to be a little more careful, Lord."

I believe David walked with a limp this time as he danced. He was a little less sure of himself. He makes all of these sacrifices. He was a little less confident, a little less cocky and much more careful to do the Word of God as it was written.

You notice in verse 13 that when those who were carrying the Ark of the Lord had taken six steps, they sacrificed. They should have done this the first time and now David makes sure it's right. "Guys, we are going to obey God's Word to the letter." David takes the Ark back into Jerusalem.

Well, let's wrap up this first portion and we will look quickly at the second portion of the text. In this first portion, as we consider God's strong warning to charismatic, let's be careful that we always submit ourselves to God's Word. Whatever our experiences are of the Holy Spirit, however much fun worship becomes, what God is looking for is whole-hearted obedience from the inside of us. Worship involves our hearts.

Let's be careful about over familiarity with God. We always need to recognize that there is this two-sided nature to God. Yes, he is more loving, more tender, more kind than any person we have ever met by an infinite amount.

But God is also holy. He is a jealous lover. He will not be slighted forever. He will discipline us.

Let's take a look then at verses 12-23, very quickly. This is when worship is right. David's relationship with God, unlike verses 1-11 when it went sour, is now restored. And before I said this is God's Word, I believe that this is God's warning to conservative evangelicals who oppose celebratory worship and extravagant expressions. You see David wearing his little linen ephod in verse 14, dancing before the Lord with all his might with shouts and the sounds of trumpets. But Michael, his wife, is looking at David and it says, "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 of worship and not a participant. Have you ever noticed how your perspective changes when you stop observing and you start participating? We evangelicals 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."

Think of all the people in evangelicalism whose entire ministries 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 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/accessor hats and get out of the stands and get in the game.

And I say this with all affection, but many of you are not playing the game. You are observing the game. You watch the game. You might even enjoy the game. You are just not in the game. Its true in the area of ministry and serving other people. It's true regarding getting involved in a small group. For some of you, it may be a much more global issue and you have never gotten into the game called Christianity and you're just not giving your heart to Jesus. And regarding worship, you are an observer of worship.

“Even though I like the way the first worship song sounded, and the last song, but the female vocals on that third song – WOW, they just 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?”

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

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 service, 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.

We are talking about Michal's heart. Now there's a second point 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 heart.

It is impossible to look at bible 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 lying on their face; 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. There is passion involved in worship both in the Old and New Testaments. There is passion; there's emotion; there's the giving of your heart.

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 conservative evangelical

portion of the church? 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.

You see it all through the New Testament. You know the other day I was doing just general reading in the scriptures off of a bible reading plan. I noticed very often that people in the New Testament were rebuked for their emotion. And so, I began looking up the word “rebuked” and tracing it through the gospels and I found a number of instances where people were told basically to shut-up or to stop it because they were getting too emotional for the comfort of this Michal-hearted person.

For example, [just to use a few illustrations] the Pharisees on the day of Jesus’ triumphal entry listened to the people shouting for joy as Jesus came into Jerusalem on a donkey and they said to Jesus, “Jesus, rebuke your disciples. Tell them to stop it.” That is enough shouting to Jesus and enough praise to Jesus. Enough Messiah; save us *now*. Help us. Jesus responds: “If they stopped it, even the very stones would cry out.”

Do you understand that when God is present, there is this heart-cry. People don’t stand there mutely with their hands in their pockets, whistling and looking around. Do you understand how the people of God respond to Jesus? The stones would cry out if God’s people didn’t.

But it wasn't just the Pharisees who had such a problem with emotion. The disciples did. The poor blind man, Bartemaeus, who was sitting along the roadside and Jesus walks by. Bartemaeus starts screaming, "Son of David, Son of David, heal me." And the disciples rebuked him. Again we see the same word: rebuked. Shut-up. Then the women, I can see them in tears bringing their children to Jesus, "Will you please bless my baby?" Get away from him. No displays. Back away from Jesus. Show a little dignity.

The classic example of what I am talking about by this Michal-heart is the when Mary of Bethany comes before the Lord Jesus just a few days before he was crucified, during Passion Week, Mary of Bethany comes before Jesus and takes an alabaster jar, an expensive jar and she smashes it. It was full of ointment. And the perfume smell rises in the world and she pours it over Jesus' head and then she kneels down and unties her hair and she is weeping. Her tears are falling on Jesus' feet and she is drying his feet with her hair. You talk about a display. The disciples are just mortified.

I have, for a long time, pictured people coming into the church in these nice little clean vessels, all shiny and proper. Tall, thin vessels and little round vessels and short stubby vessels and we very coolly push down the aisle and sit down. All of the vessels sitting proper and lined up. Hundreds and hundreds of vessels each sitting on their chair. And then this one vessel throws itself down on the ground and smashes itself all over the floor. It is broken. And there is this crying and weeping

and everyone says, “Oh, my goodness. How improper. How undignified. What is wrong with them?”

That is the Michal heart. 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?

Why do we have such a hard time with emotion? Well, let’s just quickly lay out some of the reasons and be honest with each other. Because many of us, particularly

those who have been raised in more traditional churches have great difficulty with any display of emotion at all. Not even in the church, but also with personal contact and personal interaction. If we are talking with somebody who begins to get emotional, we may have a tendency to freeze up. It is also the case that not only do we react against other people's emotions, but we may react against our own emotions.

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, 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. Many, many white Protestants in the United States come from northern European backgrounds. 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 the culture I am interacting with works. 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.

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. 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.

Some of us have a faulty view of salvation. We don't know what salvation means. Do you realize that when Jesus saves you, rescues you, he wants to make you whole? The word "salvation" literally means to make whole. "Sozo"—to make whole. For years I didn't understand what was going on in the process Christians call sanctification, that is to progressively be made like Jesus. I thought that the only thing that God was doing was trying to attempt to make me moral and to make me stop sinning. Which is a big thing and a big job for someone like me.

But being made whole is more than being made moral. This is important. God is not only in the business of making you more moral. He definitely wants us to be more moral, but he is making us whole. That includes our morality, but is not exhausted by our morality.

It also means that God is restoring your emotional wholeness. Think about it. Where you fall, where I fall emotionally, where I have trouble, where things just aren't wired correctly in my heart, not in my morals, but in my heart, in my emotions, God is in the business of making that whole. He is restoring the full humanity, the image of God that was stamped on you, but got twisted by your sin and by your fallenness and by my sin and by my fallenness. Some of that wholeness has to do with restoring our masculine images as men. Restoring the feminine image of women. There is wholeness in salvation. And many of us have a false view of salvation and therefore we oppose emotions because we don't understand that salvation means restoring the entire image of God.

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. 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 false view of salvation, 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.”

“Yup. 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 move forward on Sunday morning to receive prayer or pray for somebody else. I can choose to risk in spiritual things and be made to look foolish in my own eyes. 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.”

Brothers and sisters, I believe that God has a strong warning to some charismatic who say that I can worship God any old way I feel like as long as we are having fun. Truth can be thrown out the window. God's Word can be thrown out the window. God says, "No. I have appointed a way to worship and I want worship in truth according to the Word of God."

But he also has a strong warning to some conservative evangelicals who say, "Stop it with your emotional displays. Stop it. Emotion is bad." God says, "No. That is a Michal heart." In the same way that God judged Uzzah by killing him, he judged the conservative evangelical, Michal. It says, "Michal, daughter of Saul, had no children to the day of her death." There was a curse on the emotionally sterile Michal. And sadly, for many churches that have quenched God's Spirit and rejected emotion in worship, there is sterility and barrenness. The ability to produce spiritual change and spiritual children and healing is cut off from them.

God wants more. He wants all of us: heart, soul, emotion and intellect. All of us need to be brought before him in celebration and humility, in brokenness and tears.

That is worship—Vineyard style. Let's pray.

Worship Vineyard Style

Rich Nathan

February 2-3, 2002

Worship: Worship as a Lifestyle Series

2 Samuel 6:1-23

- I. God's Strong Warning to Charismatics (2 Sam. 6:1-7)
 - A. Spiritual Experience Without Obedience
 - B. Over-Familiarity Without Fear
- II. Interlude: Broken-Life Experience (2 Sam. 6:8-11)
- III. God's Strong Warning to Evangelicals (2 Sam. 6:12-23)
 - A. Worship as an Observer
 - B. Worship Without Emotion
 - 1. Our Backgrounds
 - 2. Our View of Salvation
 - 3. Our Dignity