

Worship
The Power of Worship • Message 2
Bryan Jones
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Prayer Points for Prayer Time

- Ask God to help you prioritize Him in your worship and daily life.
- Pray for a boldness to worship freely.
- Pray that your worship is a witness that draws others to His kingdom.

Scripture Reading:

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!" The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

Acts 16:22-32 (NIV)

A. Introduction

Why are we doing this series... why is this so important? Because we all worship something... and you all are worshipers.

I love what Tony Evans said about our commitment to pseudo worship (sports teams) and our commitment to worshipping on Sunday. I thought it was very timely today in honor of the Super Bowl... and can we just thank Jesus that we don't have to watch another Taylor Swift Super Bowl... come on!

A serious fan is going to leave for church two hours before the service begins. They are willing to fight the traffic, and they are willing to fight the inconvenience because they've decided their team is worthy of that inconvenience. Then they get to their parking spot at their cowboy church. Once they park, they're going to have a long way to walk to get to their seat in the sanctuary, but it won't matter because they've decided that their team is worthy. They will then sit for three hours. They will not leave church early, nor will they complain that the service has gone too long. This is because they know what it's like to leave one minute early and miss that big thing happening on the field. Overtime is even celebrated! Worship on Sunday will take them seven hours. When they get home, they will turn on the NFL Network to review what they saw. So they are going to meditate on the sermon and review the high points of the service. On Monday, because they are serious about their worship, they are going to get into a small group at work, meet around the water fountain, and discuss the worship service they just had... Then on Tuesday, they're going to start looking at what the sermon is going to be next week, who's coming to preach a guest sermon, and what the conflict is going to be. Now, they are discussing the sermon before the service even starts. All this is because they aren't just there for the event. They have made this worship a lifestyle. It carries them every week, all week, all season. If you can give that much worth to someone who wins today and loses tomorrow, or if you are willing to give that much inconvenience for something that doesn't add that much to your daily life... Explain to me how the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and God of Gods can't get a minute of your time on Sunday...

God wants us to show up to worship, but he also wants us to understand that worship isn't all about us! It's for others!

Let me say right from the outset: One of the things I LOVE about our church is that you guys come from all different backgrounds. We have people who grew up in church contexts where worship was solemn and reflective. And for those of you getting wild and crazy, it looks like this (hold out hands by your sides), it looks like you're holding an invisible microwave in church. Others of you came from backgrounds where quiet was never a word you would associate with church. For a lot of my Pentecostal friends, worship wasn't really good unless somebody passed out. You can tell who the Pentecostals are here--they are the ones out in the lobby stretching before worship starts because they don't want to pull a hammy.

So, I realize we come from different places when it comes to worship... so that's why we are doing this series on worship...

To help give us a biblical perspective on why and how we worship... today, I want to look at a passage in Acts 16 about the apostle Paul, and I want you to see 2 things.

B. The Power of Worship

1. Worship changes YOU.

(Acts 16:16-18. C/R: Matthew 14:24-25; Acts 16:22-26)

Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days. Finally Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.

Acts 16:16-18 (NIV)

Now, where it says she had a spirit, that is the word *pneuma pythona* (python spirit), which points back to the book of Genesis, where Satan is referred to as a serpent.

Think about this, your problem is way more spiritual than you think. You have to win the battle in the spiritual before the physical.

And listen to what happens, Paul gets so annoyed that he does this exorcism. How many of you have ever performed an annoyed exorcism on your kids? 😊

The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.

Acts 16:22-24 (NIV)

So the magistrates would have six lictors in Rome, and they would have these wooden rods wrapped in leather... and they would hit them up to 40 times. It was brutal.

Many commentators say this was his worst beating.

Roman prisons had two parts: an outer one and a more maximum-security one, and that was where Paul was.

No lights, no toilet... just chained to the ground.

Then they are put in stocks. (show picture... feet in bottom, hands on top)... These men would have exposed flesh from the beating, possibly broken ribs, and extreme pain.

At this spot... with possible broken ribs and in pain... think about what they did.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Acts 16:25 (NIV)

Notice he begins to worship in the midnight hour, worship in the pain.

Now I want you to understand something... worship frees you.

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose.

Acts 16:26 (NIV)

Let me make a bold statement:

Worship changes you:

- 1.) Outside.** (circumstances, situations... Jehoshaphat as they worship in 2 Chronicles 20, walls of Jericho, and Moses holding hands up)
- 2.) Inside.** (heart, soul, mind)

Anxiety... I would wake up in the middle of the night at 3 o'clock constantly... I couldn't sleep, and I would get so overwhelmed... I would just pray and worship... and would beg God to remove my anxiety, but it didn't happen... it was such a dark storm... fast forward about 2 weeks in, I woke up at 3 am.... And I'm reading my Bible... and the crazy thing is I usually read the NIV or as I call it the Nearly Inspired Version for all you Bible nerds... but I happen to be reading in the ESV, it's a more literal translation, and this is what it said...

but the boat by this time was a long way from the land, beaten by the waves, for the wind was against them. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them, walking on the sea.

Matthew 14:24-25 (ESV)

The NIV doesn't mention fourth watch... but the ESV does... so I'm overwhelmed... and when I research... this is what it says, it's the darkest part of the night... it starts at 3 am... this is when Jesus shows up to the disciples. I felt like God whispered, *I've been here the whole time in your darkest hour*. And something shifted in me...

I was no longer afraid of the night... I would wake up and sing in the middle of the night.

Worship will always change you. Sometimes it changes circumstances, but it always changes you on the inside.

2. **Worship changes OTHERS.**

(Acts 16:25. C/R: Psalm 47:1; 95:1-2; Acts 16:29-30; Ephesians 5:19-20)

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Acts 16:25 (NIV)

Notice... others were listening to them.

Here's my favorite short definition of worship. Worship = putting the worthiness of God on display. In fact, that's where we get the word worship from: Worship = Worth + ship. When you worship, you are declaring its worth to others.

So here's my question for you: What does your worship tell others about the value of God to you?

I've said this before... but sometimes people have said, *Hey, I didn't like the worship* and I always want to say *Well, good, it wasn't for you...* It is for God first, then others, then you.

And can I just say why this is such an important subject to me? There have been times I have been in this room, discouraged by something, carrying a burden, times when I didn't feel like I was ready to preach, and then I'm in this room, and the worship I see from you shifts something in my spirit. It's like I get a spiritual worship transfusion of life and power from you...

Why? Because worship is contagious!

speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:19-20 (NIV)

Notice it says here that worship is a gift to others... that's why it says speaking to one another... worship isn't just individual, it's corporate, it affects others.

I have zero judgment on how you worship. But I think some people have been more influenced by denominations than Bible doctrine... and some of you grew up like me, where people just stood there and didn't sing to God... so you have just always kind of been like that.

Worship is about expressing our love to God, which also changes others...

There are times for reverence, there are times for sitting, but there is always time for praising... we do all of them on Sunday. Just take a step.

Come, let us sing to the LORD! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing psalms of praise to him.

Psalms 95:1-2 (NLT)

Notice it says joyful, it doesn't say beautiful. That's why we have a sound system to drown you out a little bit... You might be singing, but is it joyful...

Some people sing like this: *How great is our God. Sing with me, how great is our God. ... all my life, you have been faithful, all my life, you have been so, so good. I will sing of the goodness of God!*

If you're happy and know it, tell your face!

Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!

Psalms 47:1 (ESV)

Notice it says loud... see, it's in the Bible.

But notice it also says clap your hands... and shout... don't you see that is cheering... why cheer? If you're a Christian, you are on the winning team... You have a God who defeated sin, death, Satan, and hell. So why is the church the place that winners don't respond to live that way?

Because cheering is the natural response to victory, and listen, if you're a Clemson fan, you need something to cheer about... so let it be worship! So when we come together, and people are cheering for God, it starts to impact others.

And why do people raise their hands? Why? Think about these 2 reasons: one, it's the international sign of surrender... people in different languages know to throw up their hands. It's a way of surrender.

But it's also a way to testify... when you go into a courtroom, someone will raise their hand and say, *I promise to tell the truth...* they are testifying... so when you see people around the church raising their hand, they are testifying to the goodness, power, and love of God!

Listen to this...

The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:29-30 (NIV)

Do you notice this... this guy saw the power of their worship... and he came in and said, *How can I be saved?...* their worship was a witness that changed others for the glory of God...

Let me challenge you to two things:

- 1.) Show up and worship God on Sundays... (it will be a gift to others)
- 2.) Show up to work (and even to your family) and praise God during difficult seasons...

Paul did this, and the jailer wanted the joy Paul had.

Do you realize that's what your worship can do... some people in this room have been changed not by this stage but from one of you out there... they've seen some of you worship, and they go, *God, I want that... I want that kind of faith... that kind of life.*