

CORE VALUE #4: Passionate Worship

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West Valley Presbyterian Church

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An older gentleman who had been a Christian for a long time decided to attend a large mega church in the city one Sunday morning, instead of going to the small mainline traditional church in their rural community that he had been attending for years.

He came home and his wife asked him how it had been.

"Well," said the man, "It was good. They did something different, however. They sang praise songs instead of hymns."

"Praise songs," said his wife, "What are those?"

"Oh, they're okay. They're sort of like hymns, only different," said the man.

"How are they different?" asked his wife.

The man said, "Well it's like this - If I were to say to you: 'Martha, the cows are in the corn,' well, that would be a hymn.

If, on the other hand, I were to say to you:

'Martha Martha, Martha, Oh, Martha, MARTHA, MARTHA, the cows, the big cows, the brown cows, the black cows, the white cows, the black and white cows, the COWS, COWS, COWS are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn, corn, corn... are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the CORN, CORN, CORN. The cows, the cows... are in the corn, corn, CORN.'

Then, if I were to repeat the whole thing about seven times, well that would be a praise song."

A younger Christian man, who normally attended a mega-church in the city, was visiting relatives in a small town one weekend and attended their mainline church.

He came home and his wife asked him how it went.

"Well," said the young man, "It was good. They did something different, however. They sang hymns instead of praise songs." "Hymns," said his wife, "

What are those?" she asked.

"Oh, they're okay. They're sort of like praise songs, only different," said the young man.

"Well, how are they different?" asked his wife.

The young man said, "Well it's like this - If I were to say to you, 'Martha, the cows are in the corn,' well that would be a praise song. If, on the other hand, I were to say to you:

'Oh Martha, dear Martha, hear thou my cry!

Turn thou thy whole wondrous ear, by and by...

to the righteous, immutable, glorious truth.

For the way of the animals is terribly uncouth!

There in their heads is no shadow of sense...

They sneak into my corn unless they are fenced.

They have broken their shackles, their warm pens eschewed.

All mild sweet corn they have utterly chewed.

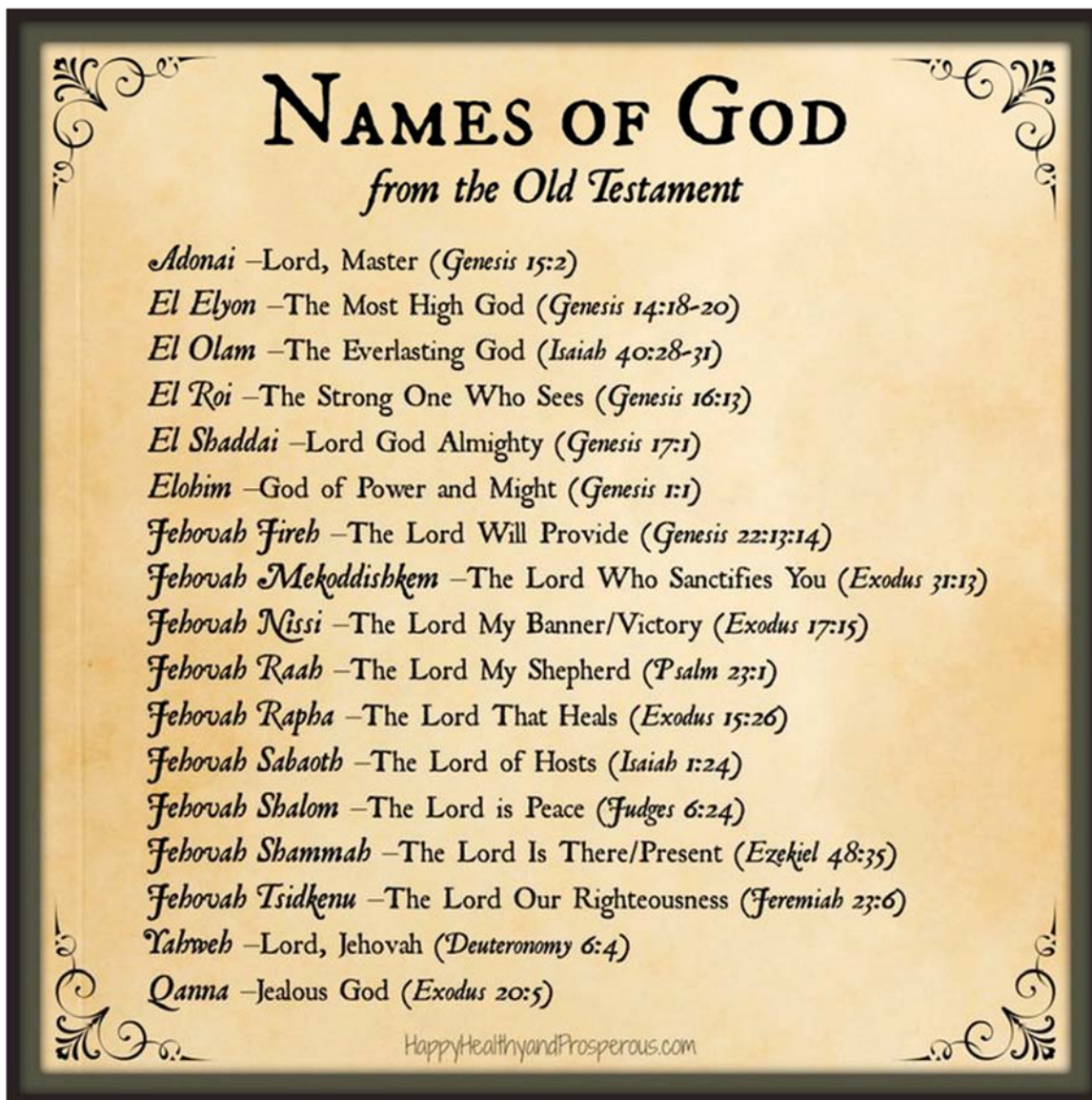
So look to that bright shining day, by and by...

Where no vicious animal will make my soul cry...

If you sing that through with the organ, and do a chord change for the last verse, well, that's a hymn.

Needless to say, although this is very funny, its so often where churches get hung up on worship. Arguments about music have been in every church for as long as I can remember

For some...



Even the seraphim were praising God in Isaiah for who God was – Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of Hosts! Heaven and earth are filled with his glory!

Are we grateful today for who God is? Do you want to say thank you Lord for who you are and what you have done for me? Is your praise of God coming from a heart that is grateful and full of joy for Jesus ?

You see, the best part of it all... is that when we truly place our focus on who God is, our worship service becomes vital... becomes vibrant... becomes passionate.

What makes worship boring is not the style of the music or the flow of the service; worship is boring when it is no longer about focusing on how wonderful Jesus is.

Yes we may use video... we may use lights... we may use organs or guitars or drums to enhance the worship experience...

but the point is that all those things should point us to God and help us to know him, understand him, and adore him more fully!

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God."

Clearly, worship is all about the heart – having gratitude to God and then expressing that fully! Bringing our whole selves to this moment and not holding back...

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly..." the **Greek word** here for **richly means** an abundance... **an overflowing abundance**... the kind of rich that makes you say

"Tsk... tsk... no one person should have that much money!" "

You want to see passionate worship – one of our core values here at WVPC expressed?

That's easy... let the word of Christ fill you so fully that you burst. Let the joy of God fill you so abundantly that people say,

"Tsk... tsk... no one person should have that much joy!"

When we focus on God, and worship him, that focus on God and his goodness changes us.

And let me say also that we limit our understanding of worship when we think it is all about singing, music, or just a "worship service" for one hour a week.

Did you catch one of the other scriptures we read? The one that said,

"Present yourselves as a living sacrifice...for this is your spiritual worship!"

What does that mean?

It means that every part of our lives – no matter what we do, or how we go about our day – all of it, if we are doing it right – our whole lives ought to be an act of worship...as we constantly are looking to God from a place of abundant gratitude and doing everything for God's glory and honor...to lift him up....

To say thank you, thank you, thank you! Where would I be without your amazing grace, your steadfast love, your constant companionship and Holy Spirit power?

Thank you Jesus!

Present yourselves as a living sacrifice...for this is your spiritual worship

You know what the problem with a living sacrifice is? (first slide)

It keeps trying to climb off the altar. (second slide)

That's why we gather here.

To encourage each other... ..to inspire ourselves as the body of Christ to keep at it! To keep praising! To keep living our lives in such a way that everything we do is focused on glorifying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations, from which come our core values, Robert Schnase writes, **"God in Christ changes people's lives through Passionate Worship Services. Passionate Worship in church, stirs people's souls, inspires them, and strengthens them. They find such help and courage and belonging and care that they cannot help but talk about the sermons, ideas, stories, music, and prayers during the week"** (Abingdon Press, 2007; p. 53).

What the church offers the world in worship every Sunday is meant to spill over into every part of life. This joy in the goodness of God cannot be had anywhere else.

One cannot get it at the beach. It cannot be obtained on the golf course, or drinking coffee on Sunday morning while listening to the news.

The good news of Jesus makes all the difference in the world, and we believers need to offer ourselves wholly and completely in gratitude to God on Sunday morning - whether we sing hymns or praise songs, whether we lift our songs with organ or guitar.

We need to worship in deep gratitude toward God in such a way that when we leave these walls, the message goes out with us... carries us through the week... allows us to keep worshipping in everything we do – to grow, and learn... so that

our life experience... .. may become all about our passionate love for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now at this point I'd like Glenn to come forward and share with you. He worships with passion...you can just see it coming from his heart...

As much as I've extended the definition of worship to include all of our lives – everything we do, very often, for those who love music, its in singing and expressing ourselves in song that gives us a chance to outwardly declare the gratitude that is in our hearts.

Glenn has a story that will show you how passionate worship – and in his case it found its expression in song - transforms us and strengthens us even when things are not going our way.

This is an amazing faith testimony that Glenn will share with you, because its so easy sometimes to let the difficulties of this life draw us away from focusing on the goodness of God and worshipping him with our whole heart, soul and mind. Glenn kept worshipping despite adverse circumstances.

Here's what happened. (Glenn's testimony. Glenn will lead us in Amazing Grace at the end and then I will lead communion)

Good morning church, praise God for our faithful family. I would like to share with you the tremendous impact that praise and worship has had during the last 3 years of my life. It has such a deep meaning that when Pastor Engelmann talked about passionate worship, well ... I guess that my response must have been, umm, passionate? That she asked me to give this testimony

In September 2016, I lost my job after 23yrs ...as part of a workforce reduction. For the better part of 20yrs I had a very fruitful career -- creating new divisions, leading Merger and Acquisition efforts, defining new products and more.

But in the last two years my situation took a nose dive – like stepping off the edge of the Grand Canyon – nose dive. I had 9 managers in 18 months. I would go to meetings and in public my peers would openly attack saying, “You don’t know what you are talking about”. I became acutely aware that I was a blacksheep in the department.

The rate that this happened was too fast, too sudden, and too fierce. It could only be by the hand of God. My professional reputation acquired over 20 years wiped out in the span of months. I would pray, pray, ... but no direct answers came. All I could do was persevere for the Glory of God. But it is hard to live day by day, month by month, in such oppressive conditions.

Our Korean Praise team practiced on Wed evenings. Their music, is so gifted, it just draws you in. So I started coming in Wed evenings just to listen. I would sit down in the 2nd row, behind the keyboardist, ... watch her and maybe learn something.. but mostly, just to soak in the

heavenly music. To be surrounded by their praise music was like being in a warm bath.

The seat I sat in was under a ceiling light in our sanctuary. I would close my eyes ... and lift my hands ... and in that pure light... surrounded by this wonderful praise music ... I knew I was in the presence of God. ... Shielded from the WOES of the WORLD ... I was experiencing the SHALOM of God... the peace of God.

And when the Praise team played a song that I knew, I'd just start to sing along.

Oh I should mention, as it may not be obvious but... I really don't speak Korean. I can read the characters, recognize words here and there, and have a very basic understanding (and that's about it).

Yet as I was sitting there in His presence, singing with the Korean Praise Team... it DIDN'T MATTER if I mispronounced words... it DIDN'T MATTER if I sang off key. God always responded with SHALOM.

(from chorus to: Days of Elijah by Donnie McClurkin)

보라 주님 구름타시고 나팔불때에 다시 오시네
(BOH RAH JU NIM. KOO RUHM TAH SHE GO. NAH PAHL BOOL DAY AAY
DAH SHE O SHE NAY) ... LIFT YOUR VOICE, IT'S THE YEAR OF JUBLIEE
AND OUT OF ZION'S HILL SALVATION COMES.

There was no worldly judgement, just God's holy presence.
The more I sang ... the more I OFFERED my heart ... the more the SHALOM of God. And in my condition, there were weeks when I needed a lot of SHALOM!

But you know what --- It didn't matter what was the condition of my heart. GOD ALREADY KNEW THAT. HE IS OMNISCIENT. I came to realize that PRAISING GOD... is really OUR voluntary and intentional act of love and humility ... saying "Lord my heart is yours- in whatever condition it may be" and THAT... is what I think God, our loving Father wants.

When that day in September 2016 came, and my manager let me know I was being let go, I had no anger, no frustration, no discouragement – I believe that God had protected my heart through those Wed evening passionate praise times.

So now when I praise the Lord, I fear not the judgement of this world, and praise loudly and strongly – for He lifted me during the dark days, He was ALWAYS there, His touch was gentle and caring, and most importantly, the Lord God our Father is deserving of my passionate praise.

AMEN