

# MUSIC, PRAISE, AND WORSHIP

MARKUS HANSEN

Scriptures are NKJV unless otherwise stated.

Have you ever noticed that when we gather together in the house of the Lord that most often our services begin with songs of worship and praise? Have you ever wondered why this is so? With the help of the Holy Spirit, we will examine why this is. There are two basic reasons why we begin our services with music, praise, and worship. The first is to publicly confess our allegiance to Christ and the second is to make room for the Holy Spirit to lead and provide direction.

## **Publicly Confessing our Allegiance to Christ**

Jesus said, *"Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven"* (Matthew 10:32). As never before, we live in a world of the 'self-made man.' Today, man's needs are met through what most consider to be man's efforts, man's brilliance, and abilities. In modern affluent countries, there is an unlimited assortment and availability of food, clothing, homes, vehicles and in addition, health care, unemployment insurance, life insurance, house, and car insurance can be obtained. Who needs God in their lives?

The world is saying that all people are equal and have the right of determination, or the right to determine their own destiny. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10 December 1948 was created by

man with no recognition that God is the One who, from the beginning of time, made all men equal.

The Bible says, *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free"* (Galatians 5:1), and *"A man's heart plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps"* (Proverbs 16:9).

Freedom of religion or belief is a universal human right enshrined in both the Canadian Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. According to these declarations, man can believe whatever he wants. However, Jesus said, *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me"* (John 14:1).

Today, educators, motivational speakers, and the media advocate that you can do anything you want if you put your mind to it. W. Clement Stone wrote, "Whatever the mind of man can conceive and believe, it can achieve." The trademark slogan of the Nike shoe company declares, 'Just Do It.' Where is God in all this?

When we publicly join together to worship the God who showers us with all the comforts we enjoy, we are fulfilling God's requirement to honour and hallow Him and His Son, Jesus. To hallow God is to show great reverence and acknowledge that God is supreme, or Number One in our lives.

God wants to be Number One in our lives above all else. Putting anything else above God in our lives is idolatry or idol worship. The first of the Ten Commandments declares, *"You shall have no other gods before Me"* (Exodus 20:3). The Apostle Paul writing about Jesus said in Colossians 1:15-18, *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence."*

When we open our mouths and verbalize phrases like, "Praise the Lord," "Hallelujah," "Glory to God," and "Amen," we are confessing Jesus, and this is very pleasing to God. King David wrote in Psalms 111:1, *"Praise (in Hebrew, Hallelujah) the Lord! I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation."*

Luke 19:37 records that when Jesus rode into Jerusalem riding on a colt, *"the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen."* Some Pharisees were offended by this and rebuked Jesus' followers, but Jesus said, *"I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out"* (Luke 19:40). May this be a lesson to us that we do not remain silent when we gather in the house of the Lord to worship Him.

When Peter and John were imprisoned for proclaiming that Christ had risen from the dead, the Jewish elders warned them not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. After being released they met with the other apostles and told them what had transpired. Then they *"raised their voice to God with one accord and said: 'Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them'"* (Acts 4:24).

We must never tire of giving thanks to God for His saving grace and presence in our lives. We must guard against becoming smug and complacent in our self-achievements and self-righteousness or becoming too proud to verbally express our appreciation to God. Opening our mouths and verbally praising God publicly acknowledges that we believe that He is the one and only God of the universe and the Saviour of our souls. Letting our voices be heard in the congregation shows that we are focusing on Christ alone, and we are not concerned about what others think of us.

In reality, confessing Christ begins when we leave our home Sunday mornings, dressed in our Sunday best clothing, to attend church. As we walk out to the car or to catch a bus, we are publicly announcing that we are Christians. Our neighbours know where we are going because over the years they have seen us leave at the same time every Sunday, all dressed up

with our Bible in hand. They know we have committed our lives to living a Christ-like life, as a Christian, and this is very pleasing to our Saviour who paid the ultimate price with His life on the cross of Calvary.

### **To Allow the Holy Spirit to Lead**

When this present move of the Holy Spirit began, great emphasis was placed on allowing the Holy Spirit to lead our worship service. Instead of relying on talented song leaders with pre-programmed venues of pre-chosen hymns and scripture readings to lead us in worship, God showed us that He wanted to lead us. This was a new way. It was even uncomfortable for some who, by human nature, are planners or managers. To break away from the tradition of relying on songbooks, we were asked to leave our songbooks at home in the early years. We were admonished to sing from memory, hymns, and choruses that the Holy Spirit laid on our hearts. How glorious it was to witness God's people singing and rejoicing with complete abandonment and with arms raised heavenward and tears streaming down faces as all revelled in the glory of God's holy presence.

God's desire is to bring us all into a place of one accord, to be in harmony with each other, so we can hear what the Lord wants to say to the church. In today's vernacular, we might say that God wants us to be on the same page or on the same plane, all moving together in the same direction. *"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place"* (Acts 2:1).

The chorus of the hymn titled, "We Have Come Into His House" says, "So forget about yourself and concentrate on Him and worship Him." That is how we, as God's people, are able to come into one accord with each other. During the week our minds are occupied by many things. When we gather together on Sunday morning God wants us to lay aside all our plans, troubles, concerns, and issues that fill our minds during the week and yield our body, soul, and spirit to the Holy Spirit. God wants us to turn our attention to our Redeemer and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us according to His plan for our services. Remember what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman that he met by Jacob's well, *"But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:23-24).

You see, God is searching for those who are willing to forget about themselves and with true hearts seek Him and worship Him. *"For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him"* (2 Chronicles 16:9). It is a fact, therefore, that God wants to bless us with His presence when we are willing to praise Him in the congregation.

As the Holy Spirit is given free rein in worship and song, this may lead to new songs being sung (singing in the Spirit)

and hymning praise together as the Holy Spirit directs. As the singing proceeds, a theme down a particular line often becomes apparent, setting the tone for the meeting. The spirit of prophecy will sometimes follow, giving more direction for the meeting. If an elder, deacon, or one who has a gift of teaching or exhortation has something burning on their hearts, and it fits into the theme of the meeting and/or is confirmed by words of prophecy spoken, then they can with confidence minister what is on their hearts. If what they have on their hearts does not fit into the theme of the meeting, they know

that it will be for another day. The Holy Spirit is an expert at confirming His will in a meeting, often putting the same songs or thoughts on more than one person's heart.

There is nothing more glorious than to be among God's people when they are swept away by the moving of the Holy Spirit into the heavenly realms. Let us all come together on Sunday mornings to worship God with all of our hearts and be prepared to hear what He wants to say to us. Glory to God! ✚

# WHAT ABOUT MY HOUSE?

DARYL AMUNDSON

During these past few months, our family has been putting much concentration and effort into setting up our house here where we have moved recently. Finding spots for all our belongings, gathering the needed furniture, putting up pictures and decorations, plus making sure everyone is settled in their place, as best as possible, have been prime objects of our attention of late.

I don't think this is foreign to anyone, nor is it wrong. We all have responsibilities to take care of. We all put a high value on making enough money to keep ourselves warm and fed. Not only that, but we spend much time and effort getting ourselves as comfortable as we can and satisfied in pretty much every sense of the word. It is true today, if not even more than it was in Old Testament times.

I pondered this as I was reading in Haggai 1:3-9, *"Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain,*

*and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house"* (KJV).

I felt as though the Lord was asking me, "What is the condition of your house, of My house? So, we want to take care of ourselves and our family. There is nothing wrong with this except for the fact that it happens to be an appetite that is never really satisfied. We always need more food (try missing a meal or two). The money always seems to dwindle with use (do without an income for a month or two). On top of this, we are always trying to make life a bit easier and more comfortable for ourselves. It is just human nature.

We pay close attention to taking care of our business, our health and our houses, but what is the condition of His house? What is the condition of His temple, which you are? What is the condition of the church which is in your home?

Along with the necessity of taking care of our houses, and livelihoods, let us place a high priority on taking care of His house, which you and your family are.

Here are some ways to do this:

1. Make a point to spend time as a family in prayer, and daily devotions. This is as important as providing your loved ones with proper food and drink.
2. Take your family to Sunday services. This is as important as providing them with the physical safety and comfort that they need. As a father, it is my responsibility to make sure my family does not neglect the assembling together of the church.
3. Especially with the addition of Zoom meetings, it is easier than ever to attend the weekly prayer meeting of your local church. This is as important as providing your family with work, chores, and extracurricular activities that they need as well. In a time when the enemy is trying so hard to divide the church, prayer meeting with the local assembly is vital to unity. Not only this, but the brethren have strongly advised us to attend.

As I pondered and prayed about this, I realized that I could be doing better in taking care of God's house in my home. Let's all commit to doing better.

In conclusion, I leave you with this scripture, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"* (Matthew 6:33, KJV). ✝



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Headquarters:  
802 Airport Road  
North Battleford, SK S9A 2Z3 Canada

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 934  
North Battleford, SK S9A 2Z3 Canada

Telephone:  
(306) 445-2733

Email:  
info@globalmissionsinc.org

Online:  
www.globalmissionsinc.org

Traveling Ministry Contact List:  
www.globalmissionsinc.org/about

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