

Vibrant Worship & Prayer!

Over the next 6 weeks we are going to look at the 5 values of our church. Our first value is: Vibrant Worship & Prayer!

There is absolutely nothing surprising that worship and prayer are a church's value. Even when we through the adjective, vibrant, into the value.

The dictionary defines vibrant as being full of energy and enthusiasm.

In our process of defining our values as a team we came up with a paragraph long description for each of our values. As I mentioned last week, we as a team could get a little wordy. In the process of narrowing the values down to a few words each, I asked the team to preserve the paragraphs so that I could share them with you. So here is the one for Vibrant Worship and Prayer.

We believe that the vibrant practice of pursuing God in personal and corporate worship AND prayer is an ongoing life-expression of every believer. It's a way of life, not just a church service. Valuing and celebrating

the presence of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit in our lives should be an important part of every Believer's daily life.

So, today we will unwrap 4 elements of this value. The first one is:

I. Whole-hearted pursuit of God

There is a personal and corporate perspective on this. Let's look at the personal first. Last week I shared this passage written by David. I think this reflects a person who is wholeheartedly pursuing God.

Psalm 63:1-4, "You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you, in a dry and parched land where there is no water. 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. 3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. 4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name, I will lift up my hands."

It is this whole-hearted pursuit of God we value. Just to be in His presence will change us.

Paul instructs the Colossians when he writes in:

Colossians 4:2, “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.”

Then he adds in:

Romans 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 your true and proper worship.”

Paul gets to an important aspect of worship here when he calls us to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice. This means that we lay down our personal preferences, our desires, our wants as a sacrifice to God.

This is something that must be done daily and possibly even from one second to the next. Worship and prayer are a lifestyle not a task to be checked off.

It encompasses every part of our being. Our lives are to be an act of worship to God, this is what we were created for. Worship brings us into union with God. When God becomes everything to us, we are finally living how we were designed to live.

There is also a corporate element to worship. In 1

1 Chronicles 16:29, “scribe to the Lord the glory due his name; bring an offering and come before him. Worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness.”

There is a piece of worship we must do together; it’s a public celebration of the Lord. When we come together it should be as an outflow of what God has been doing in our lives over the course of the week, not the only time of worship in the week.

There is a beautiful story of how Israel stood together in Exodus.

Exodus 33:7-11, “Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. 8 And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. 9 As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. 10 Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. 11 The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would

return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.”

Amazing isn't it. God spoke to Moses as a friend. What I want to know is what God said to Joshua after Moses left.

Israel waited on Moses to tell them what the Lord had said, but in the sacrifice of Jesus the curtain separating us from the Holy of Holies has been torn down and now we all stand in the very presence of God. It doesn't matter if we are in our prayer closet alone or when we gather together to celebrate our God.

We are called to be a people of worship individually and together, corporately.

II. Beholding Him in reverence & awe!

Let's look at Psalm 86 to help us understand how we do this.

Psalm 86:11-13, “Teach me your way, Lord, that I may rely on your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. 12 I will praise you, Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. 13 For great is your love toward me;

you have delivered me from the depths, from the realm of the dead.”

So, for us to behold God in reverence and awe David teaches us that we must be taught His way. A large piece of this for all of us is to learn who He is.

When we have wrong views or misconceptions of God and His character it can block us from entering into a relationship of reverence and awe. For me it was my belief that God was just waiting for me to make a mistake so He could punish me for it.

That's a horrible view of God isn't it, but how many of us have held that view at one time or another? Maybe you still hold that view. This is what my early religious and home upbringing taught me.

I needed to learn to trust God and come to the conviction that He isn't there to punish me, but He is the loving father waiting for me, the wayward child, to return home.

When we see Him as a good, good Father then it's natural for us to hold Him in awe and reverence just like our little children do for us. You know, pre-teen!

Once we have the proper view of God, one of gazing on His perfect holiness we can join King David as he seeks to glorify His name forever.

Then notice what David said, “great is your love toward me.” He loves me! The perfect God of all things loves me! He loves me! And you know what? He loves you!

If that doesn’t bring you to awe and reverence...

III. Valuing & celebrating His presence

This simply builds on the last aspect of our worship, but when we worship, we are in His presence and as we come to realize this and value it, we are changed.

The Psalmist captures this idea in:

Psalm 100:1-5, “Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Did you hear the celebration in this Psalm? How easy is it for you to celebrate in the Lord, or is it a struggle for you?

Check out this story:

2 Samuel 6:14-16, 20-22, “Wearing a linen ephod, David was dancing before the Lord with all his might, 15 while he and all Israel were bringing up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.

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.

(Skip to verse 20)

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!”

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. 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.”

David understood what it means to celebrate in worship. I love his words, “I will become even more undignified than this.” Those are bold words especially if you are of Scandinavian descent.

There is one other point I want to touch on before we move to the next point. Turn with me to:

John 4:24, “God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

One commentator writes this about this verse:

“True worship must be “in spirit,” that is, engaging the whole heart. Unless there's a real passion for God, there is no worship in spirit. At the same time, worship must be “in truth,” that is, properly informed. Unless we have knowledge of the God we worship, there is no worship in truth. Both are necessary for God-honoring worship. Spirit without truth leads to a shallow, overly emotional experience that could be compared to a high. As soon as the

emotion is over, when the fervor cools, the worship ends. Truth without spirit can result in a dry, passionless encounter that can easily lead to a form of joyless legalism. The best combination of both aspects of worship results in a joyous appreciation of God informed by Scripture. The more we know about God, the more we appreciate Him. The more we appreciate, the deeper our worship. The deeper our worship, the more God is glorified.”

The key then is “His presence.” As you get to know God by spending time with Him in prayer, worship and in the Word, you get to know Him. As that relationship grows it will engage your whole being, heart, body, soul and mind and when that happens you can truly celebrate your Savior!

IV. It's a way of life, not just a church service.

We love it when you all join us to celebrate Jesus each Sunday, but I have to say it should be a celebration of the outflow of your walk with the Lord and not a lifeline of worship.

So, this is what you need:

Hebrews 11:6, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must

believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

Coming to church, if it is all you do, isn't enough. You need to believe God, that He exists, and He has a plan, a reward, for you! This is what we mean when we say in our vision statement that “The Log Church will be fertile ground where everyone matures in Christ.” Belief starts your journey toward maturity. Will you choose to believe God?

So, Vibrant worship and prayer is one of our values. A value because it helps us move deeper in our relationship with our Lord God Creator. As we move deeper, we are transformed into the very image of Jesus.

Check out this passage which illustrates this transformation:

2 Corinthians 3:16-18, “But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 18 And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”

Do you want the veil removed? Do you want freedom? Seek the Lord and be transformed into His image. This is our goal as a church, will it be your goal?