

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THRIVING LIFE

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What is the most powerful worship experience you have had?

What would you do if you could access the full power of God for a day but not use it for your or your family's gain?

How would your view of life's purpose change if you could do that every day?



TRANSFORMATIVE WORSHIP

Isaiah 58:6-9 – ⁶Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? ⁷Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? ⁸Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. ⁹Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

1) Powerful Worship...

We worship in song and prayer out of obedience and because it feels good. It feels right. That feeling is an opening, a beginning, not an end. We are designed to sense the presence of the Holy Spirit and hear His voice when we engage these forms of communication. The fulness of worship aligns our point of view with God's, illuminating the way to salvation and immeasurable power to perform His miracles. When we stop short in our worship, we frustrate ourselves with an obscured view and limited power. Most of us describe our dreams in the same terms God uses in His promises to us. The thing that stops us—has stopped humanity since the beginning—is what God requires to access His promises. Are you willing to do the work?

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♦ **A little goes a long way**: Our pattern of weekly worship is lovely in its way. We need it to stay the course in our daily lives. We need the reminder we are forgiven our sins, the encouragement to be a little better, the momentary reflection on spiritual truths. These are for many of us the miracles that make life enduring. These are the benefits of worship confirming there is more to life than the daily grind. For those of us arriving worn out from our weekly marathon, this plus a nap is enough. It may be restorative, but it is not transformative. God does not dishonor this kind of worship, but He says, “Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high (Isaiah 58:4).” Instead, He prescribes another kind of worship that activates the fullness of His Spirit in our beings. “Is not this the fast that I choose... (v6).”

♦ **Overwhelming worship**: Those willing to listen closely to the voice of God as heard through worship are drawn to something deeper. Jesus is always leading us further into His Kingdom. Restoration is the energy that fuels transformation along the way. The Spirit of God overwhelms us, causing His healing powers to overflow the borders of our being. When we steep in worship, we are compelled “to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke (v6).” The effects of immersive worship overwhelm us until we engage in acts of righteousness.

II) **Powerful Service...**

Most people across the ages worship for selfish reasons. People hope to find the religious formula that earns divine favor. Divine favor that satisfies a selfish drive. Give me... spare me... rescue me... Jesus turned common religion on its head by doing everything in His power to honor His Father and rescue His Father’s beloved. He worshipped in song and prayer—and mercy, justice, and kindness. It’s no coincidence that He had full authority over creation while constrained in human form. He was doing His Father’s work.

♦ **Distributing God’s grace**: When we worship, we declare that we believe in the Almighty God and His Son. We confess a savior powerful enough to heal our bodies and souls. We profess one who is merciful, forgiving, redeeming. We are at the cusp of God’s original purpose for our lives. But the contrast between nearness to God’s purpose and fulfilling it is stark. Those who worship at the edge of divine purpose present a discriminatory God to helpless victims. Those who fulfill it reveal a God of unconditional love and unlimited power. We worship

this God by demonstrating His love by “shar[ing] your bread with the hungry, and bring[ing] the homeless poor into your house (v7).” We choose to freely distribute the grace we confess abounds around us.

♦ **In this together**: Restorative worship is something we control. It serves our purposes, which include a confined amount of time in a comfortable setting. It does not interfere with our plans. Restorative worship does not have time to deal with the complications of another’s problems, sufferings, and needs. Transformative worship puts us forward into the lives of others who need time with the Healer, the Provider, the Savior. We become the hands and feet of Jesus, the only One worthy of those titles. God would have us “when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin (v7),” because these are worthy of the name of His Son. We are in this together with Him.

III) **Miraculous Power...**

Restorative worship is what we need. It barely gets us through week to week. There is no time or energy for the demands of transformative worship. Not to mention the emotional drain. We know that no good deed goes unpunished. We burnout in every way and end up behaving worse around our friends and family. The only way to live the Christian life is to accept the blessing of restorative worship... or is it?

♦ **A little help from my friends**: Restorative worship provides blessings that reveal God’s love for us in ways that get us through today. There are no leftovers. The call to transformative worship cannot be met without something more. We are left to discover whether God will fulfill His higher promise. He says, “Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard (v8).” He promises that He will join us when we take up the challenge. For more time with Jesus, do His work.

♦ **His presence**: Restorative worship dabbles in God’s power. We dip in and out of it, getting just enough to carry on. He does not promise to join us in our pursuits. When ours deviate from His, we run on our own power. He does promise to fight for us in the battles He chooses. When we pursue His glory, “Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am (v9).” The thrill of His miraculous power is always accessible to those who heed the call to transformative worship, come what may. When we say yes to His work, we say yes to life filled with His presence.