

This Attitude in Worship Will Wreak Havoc in Your Heart and Life

For the last few years, spontaneous phrase keeps welling up from inside me when I am ministering to the Lord in worship: "It's my privilege, it's my honor to give you praise." Maybe not so spontaneous anymore now that I've been singing it for two years.

When it comes to worship, I've been on quite a journey. I started singing on a worship team regularly when I was 11 years old, started leading worship songs when I was 15 and became a worship leader in my early 20s. I've led worship in hospitals for five people over 85 years old and in stadiums of 70,000 people of every race, age and color. Now, in my mid-30s, this journey has allowed me the honor of meeting and running with some of the most prominent worship leaders, musicians and songwriters of our generation. I've seen a lot and I've heard a lot. I've been inspired and I've been disappointed. And the truth is, I've probably been inspiring and disappointing to others myself. But there is one massive, and I believe extremely critical, crossroads for every worshipper on their journey (this includes you if you love Jesus at all) and it is regularly being taken for granted or even ignored in our process of praise. It's the crossroads of professional versus privilege.

One of the things that frustrates me most is that some of the enemy's most successful strategies are the ones that take a little truth and manipulate it just enough to get us a fraction of the way off course so that 1-5 years down the road, we find ourselves miles off course in our hearts toward the Lord, His people and His purposes. I call it "the pusher method." It's a little too much pressure on something that

could be good, and it ends up becoming the master of our lives. It pushes us out of bounds.

Let me give you an example of what I mean. The simple intention of offering the Lord an “excellent gift” in worship (our skill, our preparedness, our execution) can get pushed just enough that the excellent offering becomes striving, performance, and man-pleasing, and the original desire to give the Lord a good gift gets lost under the execution of that desire. This results in us getting insecure or prideful. Which results in striving. Which ends in disillusionment and burnout, doing something that was always intended to fill our hearts with joy and bring refreshment to our soul.

Another example (for those who aren’t on worship teams but maybe attend a corporate worship service or regularly listen to prominent worship music) would be this: You initially get saved or have a tangible encounter with the Lord and corporate worship becomes the tool for you to express your overflowing gratitude and adoration to Jesus. But after a while of attending these services, the pusher comes, and that overflow response becomes a routine. That routine becomes a job/responsibility, and that familiarity breeds contempt. You then find yourself “singing along” as if it were the mindless elevator music in the background of your daily life, but your heart is far from Him. This results in a dullness in your spirit, a desire to seek other things that move your heart, and then ultimately can often result in a sinful choice to fill a desire for communion with God that got buried under a “going through the motions,” duty-based Christianity.

Does either of those sound familiar?

Maybe you had an encounter worshiping with some highly skilled band at a conference. That sweet encounter can become the tool the enemy uses to push you into feeling dissatisfied with anything other than that kind of worship atmosphere every time. In turn, you adopt a critical spirit toward your local

worship team, and instead of communing with the Lord at a corporate worship service, you find yourself frustrated that it's not what you experienced at the conference, so you just choose to chat it up in the lobby instead.

Or you spend so much time standing on stages "leading worship" (singing songs and executing your corporate schedule), that you begin to bank on your "position" as a worship leader or worship musician, and you mistake that excellent execution for anointing, only to find that your heart is no longer moved and it just feels like one more responsibility on your list. Punch in. Punch out. I'm "working" (ahem, I mean worshipping) instead of actually connecting with the One for whom we all showed up in the first place.

There are so many scenarios I could describe, but here's what happened. We came to the crossroads of privilege versus professional. We have a choice to choose to view any worship opportunity as a gift and privilege to stand freely before a most Holy God who laid His life down for us and saved us from eternal death and respond by loving Him with all our hearts. Or we can professionalize the worship entity and disconnect our hearts from the choice, making it more about the act or execution or the checking-off of our list. We are really good at professionalizing worship! But friends, that is extremely detrimental to us as well as grievous to the Lord.

I have the fear of God on my life to keep my heart in a constant place of gratitude for a veil that's been torn in two, a most Holy God who made space for me to be close and a friend and counselor who desires to share His heart with me often. To never forget the pit He drew me out of, the gap His broken body bridged and the suffocating sin His sweet breath of life overcame in my death-doomed body.

There is a reason the Word instructs us to enter His gates with thanksgiving, friends, because an intentional and continual thankful heart will guard our heart from

familiarity. It's humbling to be thankful. And I never want to forget that I am not qualified to stand before Him apart from the war He waged on my behalf to purchase, with great zeal, a place for me to sit with Him in heavenly places. I did not earn that. I cannot qualify for it apart from Him, and I am so deeply and completely grateful for every and any opportunity to approach Him with a song in my heart and His praise continually on my lips for all that He is and all that He's done.

When we enter His gates with thanksgiving, we remember the privilege of worship, and then we respond with praise. But when we stand at that crossroads, and we decide to choose professional heart posture over privilege heart posture, we make way for the enemy to wreak all sorts of havoc in our hearts and lives.

We cannot forget to be thankful. We stir up our hearts to bless the Lord. We remember how His love is better than any earthly pleasure, and from that place of humble privilege, we praise. Yes, let's do it with excellence. Yes, let's celebrate those sweet and special encounter-moments at those conferences. But not at the expense of an intentionally humble place of gratitude. Always gratitude.

Because, "It's our privilege, and it's our honor, God, to give you praise/We give you praise" {eoa}

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