

Why You May Not Want to Avoid Emotional Worship After All

Editor's Note: This is part two of a two-part article on why we need emotional worship in this new season. Find part one [here](#).

Benefit 3: We Connect With God Through Our Hearts

Emotions are not supposed to be ignored but properly infuse in our worship. God is love. This means God describes Himself as an emotion, the most selfless emotion at that. When we use the feeling of love in our worship, we are connecting to God in a way intellect never could. We are bypassing the things of the flesh and mind and accessing Him with our hearts.

We are all spirits housed in flesh-formed vessels. But our emotions seem to be closely linked to our spirit man. When the Holy Spirit powerfully moves on us, we often experience an overflow of emotions. Some may cry, shout or laugh. Even David described his emotional responses to the Spirit of God in the book of Psalms. Our feelings and spirit-man are intimately associated with the other, which makes worshipping God with our whole hearts truly an out of this world experience.

Harm 3: Fake Experiences Originate in the Heart

I believe many leaders, like that youth leader who scolded us at camp, are concerned that a congregation will have counterfeit feelings of excitement. Celebrating the goodness of God can look an awful like a party. Both would have energetic music, happy people and zealous shouts. The only difference is the intent of the heart.

In a cooperate worship setting where the people are dancing for Jesus, there will likely be people only excited because of the spirited songs. Should we ban all celebratory music

because we risk someone not having perfect motives of praise? Sadly, many churches have.

Emotional excitement does not mean we're having a spiritual experience, but if we focus on passionately loving Jesus, our hearts will be positioned for genuine worship.

Benefit 4: Positive Emotions Will Be the Outcome of Sincere Worship

While enjoyable feelings (joy, peace) won't lead us to true worship; they will be the effects of true worship. Truth without effect is not truth, meaning if we're doing it right, we will get favorable results. We must always begin worship by giving to God the emotion of love and other selfless sentiments such as gratitude and admiration. Let's give in worship and not seek to receive.

As we pour out our adoration and draw near to God, He will draw near to us. The manifestations of being near to God will be the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. We can use these feelings as confirmation we are on the right track.

Harm 4: Positive Emotions Cannot Cause the Presence of God

Ironically, it was years earlier at another youth camp where I judged a worship leader of having fake excitement. The service was vibrating with thrilled teens. One middle-aged man kept singing the same fast song every morning and evening, and each time, the teens couldn't contain themselves. I was so cautious of anything fake that I folded my arms and watched in judgement, interpreting the scene as emotionally hyped and endlessly cheesy. I was certain it was fake until my younger sister rededicated her life there and returned home forever changed. Afterward, I realized I was being self-righteous and missed out on a blessing.

While excitement won't cause the presence of God, it can be the effect. We don't have to fear extreme feelings. If you become worried that you went off the deep end and sang a song with fleshly excitement, then first you need to relax. God will not strike you with lightning just yet. Simply redirect your focus toward loving God, and you're set.

Benefit 5: The Holy Spirit Can Guide Our Worship Through Emotions

We've all heard the verse that says the heart of man is deceitful. That's why following the ever-changing state of our emotions will keep us going in circles. Thankfully, God has placed the Holy Spirit directly into our hearts (2 Cor 1:22). There He leads our hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God (2 Thess. 3:5). It's interesting that He doesn't dwell in our feet or hands but rather our hearts, the home to our emotions.

As a worship leader, I've had many days where my emotional state was less than perfect. The Holy Spirit has used those feelings to show me I needed to repent or pray. At other times He has told me it didn't matter what state I was in. If He wants to move, He will. Some of the most anointed worship sets I've led were when I was a complete mess. Our dependence must be on Him instead of our feelings.

Often, I've felt the Holy Spirit direct the worship service by giving me a discernment of His emotions. I may feel an overwhelming sense of love for His lost children, or a sense of awe for His splendor. There have been times I switched over to a praise song because I felt a victorious jubilation. It takes practice to discern what the Holy Spirit is feeling. Once we can distinguish between our heart and His, we can step aside and let Him take over.

Harm 5: We Can Miss the Spirit's Cue When We're Overly Cautious

When talking to frustrated people who can't feel God, I've noticed they usually have something in common. They want nothing fake, so they distrust even the subtle, authentic experiences. This is a form of fear that can keep us in a state of doubt and confusion during worship. It takes faith to enter the presence of God and doubt will only hinder us.

Sometimes worshippers are looking for actual physical manifestations like goosebumps or heat, but those things can be circumstantial. The best way to gauge the presence of God in your worship is the amount of love you are pouring out and receiving. Seek nothing else, and you'll be right on track for a powerful move of the Spirit. In charismatic services we may see crying, laughing, shaking or even people on the floor all around us. Our job is to stay focused and fervently give our love to God. It doesn't matter if manifestations happen because the authentic experience is in our exchange of love with God.

A Final Word

We will be powerful worshippers once we learn to keep our focus on loving the blesser and not the blessing. There's no need to fear fake experiences. We're doing it right when we keep our hearts on Him, whether or not we like the band. Often music stirs our emotions to worship from a place we usually keep closed off. With practice we will learn to worship correctly with these deep emotions as we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us.

So, in this new season of God's glory, we must pray to have discernment and learn to worship with our whole heart, emotions and all. {eoa}

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