

True Freedom in Worship Has These 3 Biblical Attributes

As worship leaders, we talk a lot about freedom. We want our churches to be free to worship. But what does it actually mean?

Is freedom the liberty one feels to wield a “Lion of Judah” flag across the front of the church? Is freedom a boisterous dance? Is freedom the right to be crazy? What does it mean?

We all love to quote 2 Corinthians 3:17b: “Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty.”

We’ve taken that to mean, “When we are in church we can do whatever we want. Run, dance, shout, sing, sway, moan and groan.”

Of course, there’s nothing wrong with letting go of hindrances to expressive worship. But expressive worship on its own isn’t anything particularly Christian. Other religions worship expressively.

Remember Elijah and prophets of Baal? Here’s what happened as they called upon their god:

They cried out loud and cut themselves with knives and spears according to their custom until the blood gushed out on them. And as midday passed, they prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice. But there was no voice. No one answered; no one paid attention (1 Kin. 18:28-29).

What are the grounds for our expression in worship? Any human being with breath can dance, sway, sing, and lift their hands to a catchy Christian pop song. That’s called being human.

But if the Spirit of Lord is present, there is freedom. What

is that freedom and how does that influence our worship?

What Freedom in Worship Really Means

Here's my humble attempt to answer:

1. Freedom to Draw Near: Before Christ, we had no business approaching the throne of grace. Matter of fact, it was impossible. Because of the cross, we have freedom to approach a holy God without shame. Access is now possible.

Check out Hebrews 10:19-22:

Therefore, brothers, we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way that He has opened for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh, and since we have a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse them from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

What does this understanding bring to our worship? We don't walk flippantly into a gathering. We don't take singing to Jesus for granted. We don't cast our cares on the Lord lightly. It's the highest honor and privilege that was only opened because of the shed blood of Jesus.

I love how Psalm 2 says it: "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling" (Ps. 2:11, ESV).

So as children of God we come. We come with confidence. We come with boldness. But we also come with trembling, grateful hearts.

2. Freedom from Sin: When we worship, we don't need to be held back by our past sins. We aren't just free to draw near but are free from the tyranny of sin, our previous ruler. We have been liberated by the King of Glory and can step into new life.

Consider Galatians 5:1: “For freedom Christ freed us. Stand fast therefore and do not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Christ set us free to walk in freedom. But this verse reveals that it’s possible to be slaves again. We need to stand firm. Corporate worship is a means by which we stand firm—day after day, week after week. The songs we sing ignite our faith in the face of doubt. We learn to sing in the midst of our suffering. We learn to trust in the midst of our trial.

So when you worship, remember that you *have been* set free. It’s not something you need to cry out for or ask for. It has already been done. You just need to receive it. We’re fighting battles in the midst of a war that has already been won. Rise up in your identity.

Some people might call you crazy, but here’s an idea: every day slap on a name tag that says, “Hello, my name is *free*.” Or, “Hello, my name is forgiven, redeemed, set apart, child of God.”

3. Freedom to Gather: In many countries, freedom to gather as the body of Christ is not welcomed. It is outlawed, punished. I’ve never been in such a situation, but I can only imagine after worshipping with the underground church you’d never approach any gathering the same. We take it for granted and argue over petty differences while believers in China risk their lives coming together.

Hebrews 10:24-25 puts it like this:

And let us consider how to spur one another to love and to good works. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but let us exhort one another, especially as you see the Day approaching.

The gatherings we experience are a tremendous privilege. Let’s

not forget those who gave their lives to make it so.

Freedom. Feel it. Believe. Deep down in your bones. This isn't just a ploy to get a room hyped up and moving around. This is the work of the Spirit in our hearts, mobilizing a generation to live free, pray free, and worship free.

Let these three points influence your dancing, your singing, your banner-waving charismatic craziness. Be expressive. But let it all be rooted in the fact that Christ has made us free.
{eoa}

David Santistevan *is a worship pastor at Allison Park Church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.*

This article originally appeared at .