

Are You Going Through the Motions with God

by John Piper

Authentic praise is an expression of experiencing God as our exceeding joy, not just vocalizing words of worth. Worship is empty without joy in the heart. Praise is designed to magnify and glorify God, making much of Him. Authentic praise requires genuine joy in God as our supreme treasure. God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him, emphasizing the necessity of finding joy in God to fulfill our purpose of glorifying Him.

Scripture: Psalm 43:4, Matthew 15:8, Psalm 37:4, Psalm 32:11, Philippians 3:1, Isaiah 43:7

Topics: "Authentic Praise", "Joy in Worship"

Description

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Transcript

Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God my God." Now I would say from Psalm 43, verse 4, that authentic praise is an expression of our experience of God as our exceeding joy. So praise is not, praise is not the movement of your vocal cords and your lips stating God's worth, or even stating your belief that he is worthy, but rather it is the expression of your heart's experiencing of him as your exceeding joy. Jesus said, this people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me. So you can take praise on your lips, words that are appropriate to God's infinite worth, and have it mean nothing, zero, vain. So worship is not what happens on Sunday morning out of mouths of people who do not find God to be their exceeding joy, their supreme value and treasure.

Worship is empty when it is not the experience of joy. Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy, and I will praise you with the lyre, O God my God. Now, we know what praise is and was designed to be by God.

Praise is designed by God to be the means by which he's magnified, glorified, shown to be great. That's what praise is. It's the means by which we make much of God, magnify God, glorify God.

That's what praise is. To praise God is to make much of him. I don't think it's controversial to say that, but what's controversial is that the connection between praise that's authentic and joy in the heart is necessary.

There is no authentic praise with the lips where there is not authentic exceeding joy in God as our supreme value in the heart. That's controversial. And the reason it's controversial is because it is so devastating and wonderful.

It's devastating because you may have found or know people in your family, perhaps, you have found that you can go through the motions of praising God when, in fact, you don't have God as your exceeding joy. And then you hear Jesus say over your life, that's nothing. It's zero, it's vain, it's empty, and you are devastated.

Going to church all this time, saying all the right things, and the heart is far from God. He's not your supreme treasure. He's not your exceeding joy.

And therefore, you hear a word like this and it's devastating. But on the other side of devastation and repentance, this is the most wonderful word in the world. I mean, think of it.

To be told that God is praised by your being happy in him. That God is glorified because you're glad in him. This is no big performance.

You're not being asked to be a hero. You're being asked to be happy in God as your supreme and exceeding joy and treasure. There's just no big work that we are being required to do in order to praise and magnify and glorify God.

This is wonderful, not just devastating. God's purpose is to be glorified in the world, and now we discover that we fulfill that purpose by being satisfied in him. Fifty years ago, that was utterly life-changing for me, to discover that God's zeal for his glory and my longing to be happy were not at odds, but were one, was a glorious discovery.

So, the summary of Christian hedonism is God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him, which carries this radical implication. The pursuit of your deepest and longest happiness is not optional, but mandatory because you can't glorify God without it. You can't glorify God from your heart if your heart is not satisfied in God.

It cannot be done, and therefore, the mandate to pursue your deepest and longest happiness is not optional. It's necessary for your life, your eternity. Now, there is such a thing as mere duty religion, and Christian hedonism says, it's over.

Willpower religion is over. Duty religion is over because it's zero. We can perform many tasks without being happy in God, and he is not honored by them.

It isn't Christianity, which is why over and over and over in the Bible, we are commanded, delight yourself in the Lord, Psalm 37, 4. Be glad in the Lord, Psalm 32, 11. Rejoice in the Lord, Philippians 3, 1. Why? Because God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in him, and the glorification of God is the purpose of the universe. Isaiah 43, 7, you were created for his glory, and therefore, he commands you over and over again, be glad in the Lord because God is most glorified in your gladness in him.

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