

Accessing God's Power

Part 2 – The Power of Praise and Worship

This is the second message in our series on Accessing God's Power.

In our last study, we looked at The Power of the Name of Jesus.

In this study, we're talking about the Power of Praise and Worship.

Let's take a look at some important truths about praise and worship.

1. You get out of it what you put into it.

One of the most powerful principles a person could ever learn is that of sowing and reaping.

And it works like this: What we put in determines what we get out.

ILLUS – Think of it this way: A friend of mine tells me about a bank that has a special offer; if I invest with them I'll get 25% interest. I think, "Yeah, that sounds okay. But I don't want to tie up a lot of money." So I invest \$10,000. But my friend invests \$100,000. At the end of the year he rings me up and says, "Hey, guess what? You know that bank investment? I made \$25,000." "You made \$25,000?" So I jump on the internet, check my account, and can you believe it, I've only made \$2,500? I go racing down to the bank, march up to the counter and say, "Hey, what gives? How come my friend made \$25,000 and I only made \$2,500? That's discrimination ..." "How much did you invest?" "\$10,000." "And how much did your friend invest?" "\$100,000." "Well then, the answer's pretty obvious, isn't it? The more you invest, the more you make."

The more you invest, the more you make.

The Bible puts it this way: What you sow is what you reap.

Gal 6:7-8 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. (8) For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Praising and worshipping God is sowing to the Spirit.

And the thing that we as Christians have to fight is the urge to praise and worship God only when we feel like it.

Isn't it a battle?

ILLUS – But what would you think of a farmer who wakes up one morning, and his wife asks him, "Zeb, you plantin' the corn today?" And he says, "Why no, Lurlene, I ain't gonna plant no corn seeds this year. I'm just gonna wait till them there little corns start a-growing. Then maybe I'll get inspired and I'll plant some corn." And she says, "Zeb, I mean this in the nicest possible way, but you're an idiot – a complete cotton-pickin' fool. You ain't gonna get no corn unless you plant the seeds."

First you plant, then you reap – this is **the** most basic of spiritual principles.

Obedience precedes results – **first** obedience, **then** results.

If we just stand there and say, "Well I'll just see if God touches me, then I'll praise and worship Him" – we're not going to get anything.

2. We don't have to *feel* like praising and worshipping God before we can *do* it.

Let's talk about how faith works, because this is really an issue of faith.

ILLUS – I think of faith as spiritual muscle. How did Arnold Schwarzenegger get those humungous muscles? Besides the steroids, there were years of hard work. There's no use my complaining that I've got teeny-weeny little muscles if the heaviest thing I ever lift is a pen.

Spiritually speaking, every church has some who look like Arnold Schwarzenegger – their faith is strong. That's Arnie, big spiritual muscles.

But then there's Steve Urkel.

Some of you might remember Steve Urkel – skinny, weedy, little black guy, famous for bumbling his way through everything and then asking, "Did I do that?"

He's so skinny, he'd have to run round in the shower to get wet.

Almost no muscle at all.

The spiritual Arnies of the church just go through life, "Outta my way devil, I'm coming through."

Trials come their way, obstacles come their way, suffering comes their way, but they just keep going.

If they've had a good week, they praise and worship God with all their heart.

If they've had a bad week, they still praise and worship God with all their heart.

They're battle-hardened warriors.

But the Steve Urkels of the church: If they have a great week, they have great worship. If they have a lousy week, they have lousy worship.

Are you an Urkel or an Arnie?

Do you have big spiritual muscles or little ones?

Those with big spiritual muscles have learned to walk by faith, not by feelings.

They've learned that no matter how bad their week was, the Lord never changes – He is always worthy.

Heb 13:8 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

ILLUS – There once was a king who went hunting game with his friend. As the king shot the arrow his thumb came off. His friend said, "Praise God because He's in control." The king was furious and threw his friend in gaol. Some time later, the king was hunting when he ventured into a distant land where he'd never been before. Suddenly he was surrounded by cannibals. They tied him up and were ready to cook him when they saw the hand with no thumb. "No perfect, no cookie," said the chief, and they let him go. He went back to his friend and apologised. "You were right. Not having a thumb saved my life." His friend said, "Praise God that I have been in gaol for so long." "How can you praise God?" "If I hadn't been in gaol, I would have been hunting with you. And look: two thumbs."

Ps 135:3 "Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good; sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant."

He is good, therefore He is worthy to be praised.

ILLUS – So what happens if you've had a terrible week; an argument with the boss; the washing machine chewed your favourite outfit; the cat scratched you; you got a flat tyre on the way to church; you're tired, you're miserable and you're angry. **You're in no fit state to worship**

What can you do about it?

There are two options.

First, you can sit there, refuse to do anything, and teach God a lesson.

But you can't teach God a lesson because He already knows everything.

A better option is to ask the Lord for forgiveness for any bad attitudes and make a choice to worship the Lord no matter how you feel.

Choose to lift your hands to Him and begin to rejoice in the outer man.

At first, the outer man might take a bit of convincing.

But as you press on in faith, something begins to take place in your spirit.

You open up on the inside.

It doesn't require much faith to worship when you feel like it.

But if you make the effort to praise and worship; that's sowing to the Spirit.

And eventually your feelings follow suit; that's reaping.

I don't praise God because I feel like it, I praise Him because He said to, because it's good for me, because when I do He does great things, and because He's worthy to be praised whether I feel like it or not.

3. It's not enough to close our eyes and lift our hands – it matters what we are thinking.

Worship is all about a person – Jesus Christ.

Someone once said to us, “We like the church, but there's too much singing. It's boring.”

Listen to this: (John 4:23) But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

News flash: God isn't looking for great singers or great musicians – He's looking for worshipers.

ILLUS – Can you believe that once upon a time, when she was a teenager, my wife used to sit in church every week, she had long hair, and instead of listening to the sermon, she used to have a little radio connected to an earpiece which was plaited up through her hair?

Not everyone listens to the sermon; and not everyone focuses on the Lord during worship.

For many worshipers, the problem is what goes on up here. (the head)

Don't think I don't know what goes on in there – I'm human too.

ILLUS – Here I am lifting up my hands to the Lord, worshiping Him, singing, “Worthy is the Lamb...”, being very spiritual (on the outside). But do you know what I find? My mind doesn't always do what I want it to do. I begin with every intention of completely focusing on Jesus. My mind goes off on some other track. Maybe it's my stomach rumbling, and I'm thinking, “Man, I'm starving! I can't wait for lunch. Allison's made honey chicken. Mmm, honey chicken. She's an awesome cook. All that fighting at the beginning of our marriage: It was worth hanging in there just for the honey chicken. Yeah, all that fighting. I don't suppose it was that surprising that we fought so much. We were both dysfunctional – especially her. I've helped her so much.”

And my mind just wanders off into outer space.

Could Jesus have included that in what He meant when He quoted Isaiah? (Mat 15:8) These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips (“**Worthy is the Lamb...**”), but their heart is far from Me (**honey chicken**).

ILLUS – Do you ever have one of those conversations where you tune out? Someone is telling you something that's really important to them, your brain is a million miles away, and they say (eagerly), “So what do you think?” And you go, “Er, I ah, about what?” Hello, anybody home!?!

There's no connection – do you think maybe Jesus has that problem with us sometimes?

Jesus is standing in front of us while we're “worshiping” and He sees our hands raised and hears our singing, but when He looks into our minds we're thinking about honey chicken, or something else. Maybe He's there, saying to us, “Hello, anybody home?”

Mark 12:30 “And you shall love the LORD your God with **all** your heart (**that's in here**), with **all** your soul (**that's in here somewhere too**), with **all** your mind (**that's here**), and with **all** your strength (**that's your body**).” (**and then Jesus said**) **This is the first commandment.**

How can we connect with God if we don't put our whole hearts into it?

All the problems people have with raising their hands, shouting praise to God, dancing will eventually disappear when they really connect with God.

4. What we say we believe should match up with how we act.

ILLUS – When you think about it, sporting events are amazing. Most of them are centred some kind of ball. They've either got to hit it, throw it, run with it, bat it, or something. And the thing is, when they do, the whole stadium erupts. The crowd is on its feet.

Have you ever considered the logic of this?

Some guy picked up a stupid piece of inflated leather, ran across a stretch of grass, and put it down behind a line someone drew on the ground.

And people – including Christians – get excited about that, but they can't get excited about worshipping the Lord.

The God who created the heavens and the earth, and paid the ultimate price for our souls – that's something to get excited about.

You know what? Jesus could do the ball thing in His sleep!

We say we believe that He turns up at church every week.

But do we act like it?

Maybe we're singing the words, but thinking something like, "Oh, man, how long are they going keep doing this song? Where on earth did the worship leader get his fashion sense from? I don't really like this modern style music."

Criticism, boredom, impatience – these are the enemies of true worship.

What does it say about our sense of the reality of God's presence, if we say that He's here, but we act like He's not?

Mat 18:20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.

I haven't talked about the ways you can praise God – it's all in your Bible.

You can dance, sing, shout, clap...

But I'm going to ask you to do something crazy: When you worship, act like it's true that Jesus is here.

5. There is power in praise

ILLUS – Can you imagine being in a war, you see the enemy pouring over the ridges. Your first response is: "Aaugh!" Your sergeant comes to you and says, "Don't worry son. Put your rifle down and use this rocket launcher." "But sergeant, I don't feel like it." "Use it son, it works." "But sergeant, you don't understand. I'm afraid. I'm hurting. I'm unhappy. I'm depressed. My wife yelled at me." "Don't give me excuses, private. Use the rocket launcher."

Isn't that a little bit like what happens in church? Some people, you'd swear by watching them that life is always good to them.

Because they make a decision not to let their circumstances or their feelings determine their behaviour.

Others, if they've had a bad week – they stop using their rocket launcher.

Rocket launcher, you say.

Yes, praise and worship is a powerful weapon.

Ps 149:5-9 Let the saints be joyful in glory; let them sing aloud on their beds. (6) Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand, (7) to execute vengeance on the nations, and punishments on the peoples; (8) to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; (9) to execute on them the written judgment; this honour have all His saints. Praise the LORD!

That's awesome power released through praise and worship.

These verses are telling us that when we praise God, His amazing power is released in the heavenlies.

I don't praise God because I feel like it, I praise Him because He said to, because it's good for me, because when I do He does great things.