

## **Building a Strong Spirit**

Session 6 - Engaging God's Presence Through Worship

Apostle Mike Connell

### **Engaging His Presence**

#### **I. Review:**

##### **The Difference Between Praise and Worship**

###### **1. Definition of Praise**

- "Praise"....To express warm approval of, gratitude to, commendation for, or admiration for.
- "Praise"....there are seven different words in the Bible all translated as praise but expressing different aspects of what praise means
- **Praise means to declare aloud and honour the character, the glory and the mighty works of God**
  - Praise originates from a heart of humility and thankfulness to God
  - Praise is expressed with loud celebration and joy using singing and instruments
  - Praise is an action expressing our faith and trust in God and His goodness
  - Praise is our pathway into the presence of God

###### **2. Definition of Worship**

- "Worship"....to have and express feelings of love, devotion and adoration to god
- "Worship".....Greek..proskuneo...to kiss the hand affectionately, to kneel or bow in reverence
- **Praise:.. we actively build an atmosphere of celebration through singing and music and declaration**
- The purpose of our praise is to bring us into the awareness of the presence of God and worship
  
- **Worship:.. we respond to becoming aware of the presence of Almighty God, by surrendering to Him, affectionately loving Him and listening to Him**
  - When we surrender our lives and activities to God, then all our daily activities become an act of worship

###### **3. Differences Between Praise and Worship**

###### **(i). Praise can be distant.**

We may very expressive but not feel or be aware of the presence of God.

Worship is intimate and involves experiencing the presence of God

###### **(ii). Praise can be seen and heard. It is usually loud and energetic**

Worship isn't always visible to others. There is a strong inner awareness of the presence of God

###### **(iii). Praise usually involves faster songs and a strong beat.**

Worship is slower, softer and gentle. It's focus is intimate connection

###### **(iv). Praise speaks about God and His works, declaring and celebrating them.**

- Worship is always directed to God. It speaks to Him personally  
God desires us to worship Him in spirit and in truth
- **Praise prepares us to break through our fleshy resistance and engage with our spirit**

## **II. Pressing Through Obstacles to Engage God**

### **1. The Need to Press through Hindrances**

God has done everything needed for us to enter and enjoy a deep relationship with Him

- Jesus prayed that we would experience the same relationship and love of the Father that he enjoyed constantly. (Jn.17:26)
- There are many obstacles and hindrances to us engaging and enjoying God as He desires
- Examples:
  - Physical distractions
  - Our body
  - Our thoughts
  - Our emotions
  - Spiritual resistance

- **We must be determined to press through these obstacles and engage God intimately**

- **Example: Woman with the Issue of Blood**

Luk 8:43 *Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any,*

Luk 8:44 *came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped.*

Luk 8:45 *And Jesus said, "Who touched Me?" When all denied it, Peter and those with him said, "Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"*

Luk 8:46 *But Jesus said, "Somebody touched Me, for I perceived power going out from Me."*

- The woman was plagued with an issue of blood for twelve years and it could not be healed
  - She came to Jesus with desperation and pressed through the crowd to touch Him and be healed of her incurable condition
  - She pressed past the shame that she felt to engage Jesus
  - She pressed past possible recognition and abuse from the crowd
  - Her faith and persistence in pressing past the obstacles released a life changing encounter
  - Her story teaches the need to hunger and press past every obstacle to experiencing the presence and power of God
- **Example: The Canaanite Woman**
    - *Math.15:22-28.*
    - Jesus commended her faith that persevered in pressing past obstacles to obtain her miracle

- **Example: The Woman and the Unjust Judge**
  - *Luke18:1-8.*
  - Jesus commended her faith that persevered in pressing past continued resistance
- **We must be determined to press through obstacles to engage God's presence and power**

## **2. The Need for Focus**

- **What is Focus?**
  - To converge on or toward a central point of focus;
  - To adjust one's vision or an optical device so as to render a clear, distinct image.
  - To concentrate attention or energy
- **Engaging a Person in Conversation**
  - When you focus your attention upon a person in order to hear and understand them, a mutual feeling or sense of connection is experienced
  - As soon as one person becomes distracted, the focus is broken, and the sense of connection immediately ceases
  - The sense of connection can only be present if your attention is focussed
- **Engaging God in Conversation**
  - In order to experience a sense of spirit to spirit connection with God, we must give Him our focussed attention
  - There are many many ways that our attention can be distracted and fellowship broken
  - The greatest challenge in worship and prayer is to establish and maintain focus upon Him
  - Every believer must learn how to press through every distraction and obstacle that keeps us from experiencing intimacy with God
- **Pressing in to experience God and engage spirit to spirit will take time, effort, and focus**

## **III. Keys to Pressing Through to Engage God**

### **1. We are designed by God to have a Body, Soul, and Spirit**

- We are a spirit being, with a soul, and living in a body(temple). (1Thess.5:23)
  - Our body has five senses with which we interact with the physical world around us
  - Our soul consists of our mind ,will and emotions with which we think, choose, and feel
- It is our spirit that is connected to the Holy Spirit and which enables us to communicate with God.
- We are commanded to love God with all our heart and soul, and mind and strength (Mk.12:30)

- When our body is passive, our soul distracted, there is no flow of life from our spirit
- **We must choose with our will to arise in our spirit, focus our soul, and activate our body**

## **2. We must press in with our Body to engage God**

- Our body enables us to connect and interact with the world around us
  - Our body longs for food, drink, pleasure, and sleep.
  - Our body resists spiritual activity
- When we give ourselves to physically express praise we are taking dominion over our body
- Standing, moving to the music, dancing, clapping, strongly singing or shouting all stir our body into action and redirect our attention towards the Lord
  - Singing and clapping with music gathers the whole church into unity in praising the Lord
  - Don't be that one that folds their arms and is silent and passive and independent
- **Make a decision to wholeheartedly participate in praise..."Love the Lord with all your strength"**

## **3. We must press in with our Mind to engage God**

- Col 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.
- Our mind is very easily distracted and drifts towards many other things as we try to worship
- Many thoughts can invade our mind as we attempt to engage and worship
- **Example:**
  - **Condemnation:** Thoughts that condemn us, that we are "not good enough"
  - **Rejection:** Thoughts that we are unacceptable because of our weaknesses or failures
  - **Unclean:** Thoughts that are unclean or perverse that unexpectedly invade
  - **Worries:** Thoughts that worry us...family, finances, work, relationships, sickness
  - **Distractions:** People, environment, mobile device
  - **Offences:** Thoughts about people that hurt us or that we disagree with
  - **Unbelief:** Thoughts that cause us to doubt and not enter in and experience God
- Thoughts originate somewhere...often from evil spirits assigned to frustrate our worship, by invading our mind with distracting thoughts and feelings
  - We can overcome these thoughts and press through them by rebuking the thought, fixing our mind on Jesus, and actively participating in strong praise....sing, clap etc

- In order to engage God in our spirit we must intentionally keep our mind focussed upon the Lord, or we never really engage and become intimate with Him
- **Make a decision to wholeheartedly praise and to fix your mind on Jesus**
  - **Use your Imagination....Use a scripture to focus mind upon**

#### 4. We must press in with our will to engage God

- Psa 34:1 ***I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth.***
- Hab 3:17 *Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls—*
- Hab 3:18 ***Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.***
- Many people live and respond from their feelings and circumstances rather than live by faith
  - We must choose to engage in praise no matter what our feelings or Circumstances
  - When we struggling with circumstances or feelings it is a *sacrifice of praise that pleases God*
- It is with our will that we decide to be complacent and passive or to be determined
  - We can choose to arise and overcome the obstacles to engaging the presence of God
- **Determine to press in to engage God no matter what you are experiencing or feeling**

#### 5. We must press in with our emotions to engage God

- Psa 27:4 *One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.*
- Many people make decisions based primarily upon their feelings instead of on principle
  - No matter what I feel God is still worthy of our affection and our worship
- **Feelings can change.... Eg: We can feel sad, hurt, angry, fearful, anxious, burdened**
  - We cannot allow our feelings to control our decision to press into the presence of God
  - Our feelings frequently will change if we make the decision to press into God
- **Example: Paul and Silas**
- Act 16:24 *Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*  
Act 16:25 *But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.*

- Paul and Silas had been rejected, beaten with rods publicly and bound in chains in a prison
- Certainly they did not feel good emotionally.
- They chose to pray and praise the Lord and the power of God was supernaturally released.
- **We must choose to praise God in spite of our emotions.**
- **We must also choose to praise God with our emotions....to love Him passionately**

#### **6. We must press in with our spirit to engage God**

- *1Co 14:14* For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.
- *1Co 14:15* What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.
- **When we pray or sing in the spirit our spirit is expressing itself in praise and thanksgiving**
  - Praying and singing in the spirit powerfully energises our spirit and sensitises us to the Holy Spirit
- **When we overcome the passivity of our body with strong expressions of praise, and we focus our mind upon Jesus and set our heart to engage God our spirit arises within us and becomes alert to the presence of God**
  - As we become conscious of His presence, the flow of spiritual activity changes from expressive praise to quieter and more tender worship.
  - We may bow down or kneel or become quiet as we feel His presence and begin to hear His voice in our spirit
- **It is important not to draw back but to hunger to engage Him more deeply by worshipping Him**
  - As we experience His presence we worship and begin to flow with the movement of His Spirit into deeper worship, or intercession, or listening, or responding
- **We must choose to actively press through every hindrance and obstacle and to worship God**

#### **IV. For Personal Reflection and Application**

1. What has the Holy Spirit impressed upon you in this teaching session?
2. Explain the difference between praise and worship
3. Identify and name some common hindrances to engaging God
4. Why did the woman with the issue of blood receive a miracle?
5. Why is it important to focus your attention in engaging another person?
6. How can we press in with our body to engage God? What are some hindrances?
7. How can we press in with our mind to engage God? What are some common distractions?
8. How can we press in with our will to engage God?
9. How can we press in with our emotions to engage God?
10. How can we press in with our spirit to engage God?

**Activations:**

**Try practicing these activations and observe what you experience either positive or negative**

1. Clap your hands strong praise for about 30 seconds
2. Shout out in triumph loudly for about 30 seconds
3. Clap and shout and jump in strong praise for about 30 seconds
4. Pray in tongues strongly for about 30 seconds
5. Fix your mind on Jesus and pray strongly in tongues for 30 seconds  
Quiet down and begin to quietly express your love and longing for Him