

Ingredients of Joyful Worship

King David Pt.2

2 Samuel 6:13-23 8-9-2009

Summary: Their joy was not tempered by their fear; it was amplified by it ("we made it six steps and lived!!!). The ingredients of joyful worship are fear, excellent music (also amplifies what is in the heart), physical expression, and humility. There is no place for dignity in worship.

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2 Samuel 6:1-23 David again brought together out of Israel chosen men, thirty thousand in all. ² He and all his men set out from Baalah of Judah to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the Name, the name of the LORD Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim that are on the ark. ³ They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart ⁴ with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. ⁵ David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the LORD, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals. ⁶ When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. ⁷ The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God. ⁸ Then David was angry because the LORD's wrath had broken out against Uzzah, and to this day that place is called Perez Uzzah. ⁹ David was afraid of the LORD that day and said, "How can the ark of the LORD ever come to me?" ¹⁰ He was not willing to take the ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. ¹¹ The ark of the LORD remained in the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite for three months, and the LORD blessed him and his entire household. ¹² Now King David was told, "The LORD has blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. ¹³ When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. ¹⁴ David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might, ¹⁵ while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the LORD with shouts and the sound of trumpets. ¹⁶ As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart. ¹⁷ They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and David sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the LORD. ¹⁸ After he had finished sacrificing the burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD Almighty. ¹⁹ Then he gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the whole crowd of Israelites, both men and women. And all the people went to their homes. ²⁰ When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!" ²¹ David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel--I will celebrate before the LORD. ²² I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be

humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor." ²³ And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

Introduction: Establishing Corporate Worship in Israel

In our study of 2 Samuel we have arrived at some landmark chapters in chapters 6 and 7. In chapter 6 David is establishing worship in Jerusalem. That is something David cared deeply about – restoring worship in Israel. David’s personal, private worship was unparalleled. You can see that in his psalms. But he did not just care about private worship. He cared deeply about corporate worship.

Psalm 122:1 I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD."

Psalm 109:30 With my mouth I will greatly extol the LORD; in the great throng I will praise him.

In Psalm 55:14 he speaks of his close friend...

Psalm 55:14 with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship as we walked with the throng at the house of God.

David loved the thrill of lifting up his voice and having it drowned out by the voices of the multitudes praising God together. He loved the unity of it, and the way that it pointed to the supremacy of the Lord.

There is something about corporate worship that seems to amplify your private worship. If you are a big football fan, and you go to the big playoff game and in the closing seconds your team comes from behind and scores a touchdown to take the lead and 75,000 people leap to their feet with a roar so deafening that you cannot even hear yourself shouting – that is a little different than if you are the only fan in the stadium and you hold up your little foam finger and say, “yay.” David loved God and loved the name of the Lord and he wanted more than anything for it to be magnified and so he did all he could do to establish nation-wide praise. No other king in Israel ever did as much as David in establishing national worship. And he did not just do the big, high level organizational things. He did that sort of thing but he worked just as hard at addressing the individual hearts. David composed the core of the book of Psalms and taught the people how to worship from the heart in every circumstance of life. David restored the Ark to the nation’s capital after 70 years of neglect. He wanted to build a Temple, but God said no, so David assembled all the workmen and gathered all the material (1 Chr. 22). Then he charged all the leaders of the nation to help in the work (1 Chr. 22,28). He reorganized the Levites (1 Chr. 23), then he reorganized the divisions of the priesthood (1 Chr. 24), then he got the musicians organized (1 Chr. 25), then the gatekeepers and treasurers and the rest of the personnel for the Temple (1 Chr. 26). David was passionate about corporate worship because he loved the name and renown of the Lord.

People always ask me if I like big churches or small churches. If you ask me what the ideal size of a church is, I do not know the answer to that. But if you ask me how many voices praising God together is too many my answer is there is no such thing as too many.

Review

2 Samuel 6 is about joy in the Lord. It is a chapter about David and Israel rejoicing in God with all their might. Their joyful worship in the presence of God as revealed in the Ark is something that has not taken place any time in a couple of generations. In this chapter God’s people soar through the sky on the wings of praise like an airplane that takes off for its first flight after sitting in the hanger for 70 years. And in the first half of the chapter the plane gets up to full speed on the runway, and then crashes on the runway in a giant fireball. To get a plane in the air you need both lift and thrust. They had plenty of thrust – the joy was certainly there, but they lacked reverence. For worship to get off the ground it needs both joy and reverence - both delight and fear, and if one of them is missing the plane won’t fly. Joy without fear of a holy God will just accelerate you into the side of a building somewhere. And reverence without joy will leave you just sitting there on the tarmac going nowhere.

They tried worshipping God with joy but without enough reverence to obey God's Word. And right in the middle of their celebrating the presence of God, at the height of their joy and rejoicing the ox stumbled, the Ark started to slide, and Uzzah reached out to steady it, and God struck him down. All eyes were on this man, writhing, then twitching, then still. They called 911 – but it was too late. When God strikes someone dead there is no resuscitation and every bit of joy is instantly gone. The party is over, the celebration turns to grief – and then anger, and then fear. The ark is dumped, the plan is scrubbed indefinitely, and everyone just goes home.

Accounts like this are one of the evidences of the fact that the Bible is not a human book. You can imagine a human being inventing the gods of other religions. Those gods fit right in with the sort of thing the human heart might conceive of. But no one in his right mind would invent a holy God.

No one made this up. God is holy, and we are to love God and rejoice in God, but we are not to trifle with Him. God is your father, but He is not your warm, fuzzy friend in the sky whom you can approach in any way you see fit. In Scripture God has revealed to us exactly how He is to be worshipped, and if you depart from that your worship becomes an abomination. People who say, "I don't care about doctrine – just give me Jesus. I don't care about theology and Bible study – I just want to love God" – the worship those people offer is a stench to God and it provokes His wrath.

Ingredient #1: Fear of God

And so if you think through the plane crash with Uzzah you might be thinking, OK, joy is crucial in worship, but it has to be joy tempered with fear and reverence because when they had joy without fear and reverence God became angry. If I heard someone say that, I would object to the word "tempered." It is not that our reverence and awe and fear of the Lord tempers our joy or puts limits on our joy. Just the opposite – reverent joy is actually more joyful than irreverent joy. We are going to see in this passage the ingredients of joyful worship. And ingredient #1 is fear of God.

13 When those who were carrying the Ark of the LORD...

(Notice, this time they are doing it the way God commanded)

... had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf.

This time they are much more concerned about reverence than speed. Six steps and then they stop for a major sacrificial ceremony? Why? The answer is in the parallel account in 1 Chronicles 15.

1 Chronicles 15:26 Seven bulls and seven rams were sacrificed because God had helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD

The reason they offered the sacrifices was because God helped them carry the Ark. Was it really that heavy? No, it wasn't heavy. They did not need help because of its weight; they needed help because of its holiness. They needed the kind of help Uzzah did not get. Divine enablement was required for them to be able to get near that thing and live. If God calls you to a task, and the last guy who did it was turned to a heap of ashes, you need help!

I think the reason they stopped and worshiped God after just a few steps is because they were holding their breath, and then after making it six steps and surviving, they were pretty excited. Imagine you are at a work site and you see your friend touch a wire, and there is a huge blast of light and the smoking, charred remains of your friend were lying there next to you on the ground – instantly killed by some huge electrical charge, so you personally run in and shut off the breaker so no electricity could get to that wire. Even after you did that, do you think you would be a little nervous about touching the wire? If you have to touch the wire, no doubt you would hold your breath – and pray for help.

But that is actually not a very good illustration. This would be a lot scarier than that. God is not a wire or machine that we can manipulate by flipping switches. He is a person, and He does whatever pleases Him at any given moment. And He is holy and awesome and we cannot control Him or manipulate Him. And these men knew they were sinners, and saw what happened to Uzzah, and they were a little nervous about carrying this Ark. Especially since what happened to Uzzah was not a careless touching of a hot wire – but the

punishment of an angry God. You know how it feels when someone you really love is really angry with you? You see, it is not just that he died – it is that it was punishment at the hands of God. If you got hit in the face with a 2x4 because someone was just being clumsy, and at a different time you got hit in the face with a 2x4 with the exact same force by someone you love because he was angry with you, the one that was a blow from someone you love would hurt a whole lot more than the one that was an accident. Suffering trials when God is pleased with you is a piece of cake compared to suffering them because He is angry with you.

Every one of these Levites was a sinner, and every one of them knew that he deserved to die for his sin. And it had never been more obvious that they were utterly unworthy to carry something as holy as the Ark of the Covenant. So they desperately needed help. They desperately needed God's grace and mercy. Somehow they needed God to overlook their sinfulness and cover it. No doubt they were up all night the night before beseeching God for help. So once they made it six steps, they not only breathed a huge sigh of relief, but their hearts swelled with gratitude toward God, and they stopped to offer Him these sacrifices.

If we had more of a sense of God's awesome holiness we would spend a lot more time in prayer asking God for help. And when we got it we would spend a lot more time in thankful worship praising Him for His mercy. The reason reverent worship is more joyful than irreverent worship is because when you realize you deserve to die in His presence and you do not die that adds a lot to your joy. When we forget that God is holy, then His accepting our worship and forgiving our sins and empowering us for ministry and answering our prayers – it all seems like a matter of course. We just expect it. And when you get what you expect or what you think you deserve – that does not create that much joy. But when you stand guilty before an awesome, holy Judge and you know you deserve severe punishment, and instead you get mercy – that increases your joy. God's killing Uzzah was not to temper their joy in Him, it was to increase it.

And when you have that kind of joy it leads to obedience instead of disobedience. So this time they carry the Ark in the way God prescribed in Scripture.

1 Chronicles 15:2 Then David said, "No one but the Levites may carry the Ark of God, because the LORD chose them to carry the Ark of the LORD and to minister before him forever." 3 David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the Ark of the LORD to the place he had prepared for it. 4 He called together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites:

12 He said to them ... 13 It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way." 14 So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the Ark of the LORD, the God of Israel. 15 And the Levites carried the Ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD.

So this time they do it the way God's Word said to do it. And they seek to honor Him in the ways He has prescribed. I think that is another point of significance of the six steps. It seems to me that must have been a kind of Sabbath observance. Six steps and then they offer seven bulls. You see this time they are seeking to honor God in the ways God has prescribed in His Word.

Ingredient #2: Music

And their fear of God increases their joy. The joy described in this chapter is just amazing.

12...So David went down and brought up the Ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing.

That little phrase, "with rejoicing" spelled out in a lot more detail in 1 Chronicles. This was not just a little rejoicing. They were not just saying, "Oh, I'm glad we're doing this – it makes me feel kind of good." This is a big time, once in a lifetime-type rejoicing.

1 Chronicles 15:16 David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brothers as singers to sing joyful songs, accompanied by musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals.

And that brings us to ingredient #2 – music (good music). This was not just general congregational singing. David picked out certain leaders who were to designate select vocalists and instrumentalists for this occasion. Then verses 17-21 list all the names. It is interesting – Obed-Edom (that is the guy in whose house David dumped off the Ark in the last attempt), is listed among both the vocalists and the instrumentalists. He played the harp and he sang.

1 Chronicles 15:22 Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it.

It is always a little bit of a touchy subject when you talk about how much skill should be required for those who lead singing. Some people say anyone who is willing should be allowed to lead singing. When I read this I think, shouldn't the leaders of our worship be the most skilled musicians in the church? The skill of those who led in music in the Old Testament is mentioned again and again in the Law of God. It was very important. In our day there is no Temple, and it is not required or even possible for us today to follow all of the formalities and structures of Old Testament Temple worship. But on the other hand, don't those Old Testament Temple procedures that God laid out in His Word teach us something? When we worship, why would we not offer our best? If we, as a church, have the ability to present our worship to God on the platter of great music, but we put it on the paper plate of mediocre music instead – why would we want to do that? Doesn't God give certain people skill in music for a reason?

And if someone argues, "What matters is not the form. What matters is the heart." That is true – but music has a way of drawing out and enhancing and amplifying what is in the heart. God gave us music not just to express our emotions, but to increase them. Good music is like holding a megaphone up to your heart.

We do not want to turn the worship service into a concert – so you would rather just listen than participate. And that concert mentality is a real problem in a lot of churches these days. But the solution to that is not poor quality music. The solution to that is greater skill in understanding what assists worship and what does not. David was interested in assisting worship as much as possible so he gathered the most skilled musicians and let them loose.

Ingredient #3 – Physical Expression

¹⁴ David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might

That is ingredient #3 – physical expression of joy. I have to confess I have never danced before the Lord with all my might. In fact, I have never danced at all.

But I have to say, I regret that. For some reason I have zero natural ability when it comes to dancing. I am just not coordinated in that way. However I wish I were because I am convinced God gave us physical expressions of joy for the purpose of not only expressing joy, but also for increasing it. Joy is one of those emotions that the more you express it the more it grows. One of these days I want to take dance lessons, because dancing as an expression of joy is a biblical thing.

Now, are there some dangers associated with dancing? Yes. Most of the world's dancing is designed for sexual or seductive contexts. The world tends to sensualize everything. The pagans in David's day did the same thing. And as Christians our dancing should be *nothing* like theirs. So I am not suggesting that it is a good idea to do down to the dance club and do the same sort of thing the world does.

However, I am suggesting that physical expressions of joy are an important component of worship.

Psalm 149:3 Let them praise his name with dancing

Psalm 150:4 Praise him with tambourine and dancing

I realize I am a poor example for all of you on this point because I cannot dance. However I can tell you this – until the day comes when I am so happy in the Lord that I want to dance before Him I will feel that I am not where I should be in my joy. Until I get to the point where I am that thrilled with the presence of God, I will regard myself as falling short.

We all grew up in different traditions. Some of you, when you are happy and there is good music – it takes all the restraint that is in you to keep yourself from dancing. Others of you, if you tap your toe inside your shoe – not even actually moving your toe but just applying some pressure on the downbeat – you feel like you are going off the deep end of charismania. But the issue is not your tradition. The issue is what the Bible says, and where our traditions conflict with Scripture our traditions need to be scrapped.

God has given us great freedom in the physical expressions of worship. He does not tell you which movements to make at which times. God wants our expressions of joy in Him to be true expressions of what is in our heart, and so they should be mostly spontaneous. That is why we are not always up here on the stage telling you when to stand up and when to sit down and when to kneel and when to clap or lift your hands. If you are new here you may be scratching your head trying to figure out when you are supposed to stand or sit during the singing. The answer is you are supposed to stand when you are moved in your heart by the majesty of Christ and you want to express your respect or your joy or whatever is in your heart by standing in His presence. And you are supposed to sit when standing becomes a distraction or does not express what is in your heart, or you want to meditate on some aspect of His glory and you can do so better sitting down. And you are supposed to lift your hands when there is some impulse in your heart – some part of a song that you especially want to offer to God as praise. And you are supposed to kneel or bow when you want to express a sense of awe or fear or repentance, or you want to acknowledge His kingship and lordship. God has given us great freedom in our expressions. One option He has not given us, however, is the option of no physical expression. We are not at liberty to take the commands God has given in His Word and make them optional depending upon our personality type or traditions.

Just ask yourself – are you obeying or disobeying these commands? Take for example, the command to sing and shout for joy before Him.

Psalm 66:1 Shout with joy to God, all the earth!

Psalm 81:1 Sing for joy to God our strength; shout aloud to the God of Jacob!

Psalm 95:1 Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

Psalm 98:4 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;

How about the use of your hands?

Psalm 47:1 Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy.

Psalm 134:2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.

Are you obeying those commands or disobeying them? What about the command to kneel or bow?

Psalm 95:6 Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the LORD our Maker

Do you ever kneel before God? Or are you too dignified for that? Did you know that the word “worship” means to prostrate yourself before God? That means to lie down flat on your stomach face down. Do you ever do that?

I can tell you it is an incredible expression of humility. We all want more humility, right? Well, God has given us some physical expressions of humility that not only express the humility you have, but they actually help to increase your humility. This really struck me several years back when that movie Luther came out – about Martin Luther. There was a scene where Luther was praying, and he was flat on his face, prostrate on the floor, face down with his arms straight out to the side and when I saw that scene it just struck me what an incredibly humbling posture that is. And I knew that was exactly what the word “worship” literally means, and that God’s people have humbled themselves before Him like that throughout the ages, and it occurred to me that I had never done that. Now, if you made a routine out of it I am sure it would become meaningless. But in those special times of deep repentance, or when you are overwhelmed with the holiness of God, or you just want to humble your heart before Him – praying in that posture is an amazing experience.

And it is significant that that is what the word “worship” means. All worship is a metaphorical prostrating of yourself before God. Every Sunday morning when you come here and worship – all worship is a metaphorical prostration before God. And if that is the case, shouldn’t there be some times when it is literal, and not just metaphorical? Or are you too dignified to do something like that before God?

Ingredient #4 - Humility

Worship clothes

If anyone needs to concern himself with maintaining his dignity it is the king. That is actually appropriate – in most contexts. But not in this one. David cares absolutely nothing about his dignity here. And that shows us the final ingredient to joyful worship – humility.

David was humble before God, and that is clear from the way he is dressed. Many times I have heard people say he danced naked. He was not naked.

14 David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the LORD with all his might

A linen ephod was the garment of a priest. It is associated with worship. But for the king it was a very humble garment to wear because it was exactly the same thing everyone else was wearing.

1 Chronicles 15:27 Now David was clothed in a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and as were the singers, and Kenaniah, who was in charge of the singing of the choirs. David also wore a linen ephod.

David had royal robes, but he took those off. He stripped off all his magnificent, royal, kingly garments and regalia and dressed just like everyone else involved in carrying the ark.

The reason David normally wore the fancy royal robes is because normally it is proper for the king to be the focus wherever he is, since he represented God’s rule. So in most situations it was fitting for David to wear the royal robes. But in this situation David does not want any special attention on him. He wants it all to be on God.

Church clothes

Put some thought into what you wear to church. What you wear to church should be worship. I knew a man who used to wear a suit every Sunday to church. But one day he was inviting a friend to church and the guy would not come because he could not afford fancy clothes. And from that day on this man decided he would wear the most casual clothes he had, just out of love for poor people so they would not feel uncomfortable in church. The clothes he wore were an expression of love and of his heart for the lost.

I remember a conversation about clothes that took place in this church between a couple of the women a while back. One of them said, “I like to dress up in my most formal clothes on Sunday because for me that is worship. It is a way that I offer my best to the Lord.” That woman’s clothes were an expression of worship.

And the other woman said, “I like to wear casual clothes to church because I dress up every day for work and in that environment it’s kind of a façade. Everyone is putting up a phony front. But when I come to church I am coming to family, and I feel like I should just be myself and not have any pretenses and not try to impress anyone.” That woman dressed the way she dressed for the purpose of honoring God in genuine fellowship.

You should think about what you wear to church. Whether you decide on formal clothes or informal clothes, the bottom line is, do you wear what you wear because of a focus on self or because of a focus on God? Whatever you do, do not ever wear anything for the purpose of attracting attention to yourself. And that is especially important for women. If what you wear is not modest it attracts attention and distracts from people’s focus on God.

Dignity

So David humbles himself by stripping off all his kingly garments and dressing just like everyone else, in a very simple linen ephod so no attention is on him. He leaves his dignity on the ground there next to his

kingly robes and he dances like a maniac. The word used to describe his dancing literally means “to whirl.” He is not just tapping his foot to the beat. He is dancing and leaping and whirling and spinning and really busting some moves out there. And he was an athlete, so no doubt he had some great moves. But his wife was not impressed.

16 As the Ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window.

The window? She is in her house? The greatest event that has ever taken place in your lifetime is going on down there and you are sitting up in your room? What kind of snob has Michal turned into where she is too important to be down in the streets celebrating the arrival of the Ark of Almighty God into Jerusalem? She is just too dignified to worship with exuberance like this.

As I said earlier, some of you might have come from a denomination that has very quiet, subdued, formal, liturgical type worship – kind of the opposite of Charismatic worship (they call those “high church” denominations), and there is a lot to be said for much of what our high church friends do in their worship. Not everything in worship should be spontaneous. If you are against the idea of written prayers and planned, highly structured worship, then you are against the psalms. However, one of the errors that people in a high church tradition will tend to be susceptible to is the error of Michal. You begin to associate worship with formal expressions, and any outburst of emotion is so undignified that you look at it with disdain.

The great commandment is to love God. And isn't it the nature of love to express itself in both planned and spontaneous ways? If you really love someone sometimes you will spend many hours planning something really special. And other times there will just be a spontaneous gesture that comes completely out of the blue just to express a rush of emotion for the person.

When I was listing all the biblical expressions of worship a minute ago one of them that comes up repeatedly is bowing and kneeling and prostration. And I have to say it troubles me some that there is so little of that in our congregation during worship. If we really believe what we claim to believe about the greatness and holiness of God, and if we truly believe that He actually is the King of kings, how could we never drop to our knees before His majesty? How is it possible to really believe what we claim to believe about Him and never bow down? Could it be we do not do that because no one else does it and we are worried we would be a distraction? A distraction? We are worried we are going to distract people from the holiness of God by humbly kneeling before Him? Or could it be we just do not want to give up our dignity?

You know what I think is a distraction? I think the biggest distraction in worship is people sitting in the pew like a bump on a log unmoved and unaffected by the glory of God. Now, we never know what is in a person's heart. But if you are the type who keeps it all on the inside and gives no external expression, I think you are the one who runs the greatest risk of being a distraction in worship. Because there is a gravitational pull in the room toward whoever appears to be the most dignified. If you are maintaining your dignity, in my flesh I am going to be tempted to conform as closely as possible to your demeanor so I don't embarrass myself. Because if we learned anything in high school it is the fact that the most important thing in all the world is being cool, right?

That is Michal's attitude.

16 ... when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, she despised him in her heart.

It is a sad thing when there is so much joy to be had and someone cannot be happy. Not only can Michal not enter in to everyone's joy, but it is the very happiness of others that *makes* her unhappy. When you have a bad attitude there is nothing that bothers you more than people with good attitudes.

Bad wife

20 When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him

David walks in and she has her hands on her hips. Here comes the scolding.

20 ... "How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!"

That is sarcasm. Not only is Michal sinful here because she has no joy in the Lord, and because she is indifferent to the presence of God, and because in her stuck-up pride she is too dignified to lower herself to worship God, but on top of all that she is a terrible wife. God has placed the man as the head of the home, in authority over his wife. And He has called women to honor and respect their husbands because they bear the very authority of Christ, so when a woman speaks in a disrespectful way to her husband she is dishonoring the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

I think many women get so used to mothering their children that they slip into treating their husband the same way.

“How many times do I have to tell you to ...”

That is not the way you speak to a God-ordained authority. There is a place for a wife to correct her husband in a respectful way, but it is never your place to scold him or to treat him like a child.

And if you think Michal is just concerned about David’s dignity for David’s sake, think again. She does not want her husband humiliated not because of her love for him but because of her love for herself. Her dignity is tied to his, and so when he is humiliated she is reduced to nothing more than the wife of the wacko king. And so she scolds her husband for humiliating himself in the sight of the common servant girls. And look at David’s answer.

David’s answer

21 David said to Michal, "It was before the LORD..."

“It wasn’t before the servant girls that I was dancing – it was before the Lord. I wasn’t trying to impress them; I was trying to worship God. Nor was I trying to impress you. You are not in a position to critique what I was doing, Michal, because it wasn’t for you – it was for the Lord. If I had been dancing for you, then your opinion about it would be relevant. But I was worshipping God and so the only thing that matters is what He thought of it, not what you think.”

Be careful about critiquing people’s worship. There are some who spend more time in the worship service critiquing other people’s worship than they do worshipping.

“Why does she lift her hands so often – is she doing that as a show? What’s the matter with him – he’s not even singing. He needs to get into it more – not as much as her, but about like me.”

If you are critiquing other people’s worship maybe you should stop to think, if their worship is not appealing to you that is OK because they are not worshipping you.

One of the strategies of the seeker friendly movement is to use music to attract people to the church who are not necessarily interested in God, but who like that music style. People in churches like that develop a mentality of thinking the music is for them. So they are critiquing it all the time. Our main concern at Agape is not whether you enjoy the worship, because we are not worshipping you. Our concern is whether God enjoys it. We are like David – we are doing this before the Lord.

That is not to say we don’t care about whether the styles we use are helpful or unhelpful in drawing your heart into worship. We care very much about that. My point here is simply that we should probably spend less of our time critiquing everything and more of our time seeking to enhance whatever is being offered by combining it with wholehearted worship. And we should be especially slow to critique the expressions of others as they worship.

If you want to critique someone, critique yourself. Ask yourself - when is the last time you did something in worship that was undignified? Or have you ever held back in your expressions of love for God because you were worried about what others would think?

22 I will become even more undignified than this

“Michal – you think that was embarrassing? You aint seen nothing yet. You don’t even know what undignified means – I was just getting warmed up. If you want to see undignified wait till you see me really get into worship. What I did down there was nothing.”

22 I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor."

Unlike Michal they were celebrating the arrival of the presence of God in Jerusalem. And servant girls with those kinds of godly affections will also honor God’s anointed.

Become undignified in the eyes of the world and just focus on worshipping God and you will find that the most spiritual, godly people will actually honor you. The question is not really whether you will be held in honor. The question is whose honor do you want? The world’s or the saints’? Because they are obtained in completely opposite ways. You get honor from the saints when you humble yourself. Who do you think is the most humble person in this church? Isn’t that also the person you have the most respect for? It will be if you have a heart after God’s heart. So which way are you going to go? Do you want to win the world’s favor through maintaining your dignity and being cool? Or do you want to win God’s favor and the favor of His saints by leaving your dignity on the ground and worshipping with all your might before the Lord?

Conclusion: Rejection of the way of Saul

The first way is the way of Saul and this text makes a big point of that. Watch how David describes God.

22 It was before the LORD who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the LORD's people Israel--I will celebrate before the LORD.

That is not just a jab. David is making a point. He is explaining to his wife that God has rejected not only Saul but Saul’s whole approach to life. And right now she is being her father’s daughter.

The narrator makes the same point.

16 ... Michal daughter of Saul watched from a window.

20 When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him

23 And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

Every time she is “Michal daughter of Saul” just like Ish-Bosheth was always “Ish-Bosheth Saul’s son.” Sometimes she is called “Michal, wife of David” and other times “Michal, daughter of Saul.” This time without a doubt she is acting as the daughter of Saul and not the wife of David.

Saul took the approach of caring more about human honor and human favor and human approval than about God’s favor and approval. We saw that in detail when we did the study of the fear of man. And David is saying to Michal – God rejected that approach and chose a king who took the approach that you are now mocking.

And then God affirmed what David was saying by putting the final nail in the coffin of the house of Saul.

23 And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

Saul will have no offspring. His house comes to a complete end because God will not accept those who are concerned for their own dignity above His.

The two wrong kinds of worship

Last week I made the point that the first half of this chapter is important for our charismatic friends. Those who worship with great joy sometimes forget they are worshipping a holy God, like Uzzah. We do not want to be like Uzzah, but nor do we want to be like Michal. And if you think Uzzah’s punishment was more severe, I

doubt Michal would agree. For women in that culture being childless was the worse curse imaginable – especially if you are married to the king. She probably considered it a fate far worse than death.

Michal was not guilty of violating any protocol or taboos, or making any kind of misstep around the Ark, because she was watching from the window. She did not have to worry about making any mistakes in worship, because she was not even worshipping. Her heart was totally untouched and unaffected by the prospect of the presence of God coming to Jerusalem. Some of us are so passionless in worship that there is zero danger of us getting carried away. Our worship is so stiff and structured and dull that there is absolutely no possibility whatsoever that anything unplanned could ever happen. But at least we maintain our cool. That is the way of Saul.

Let's make our worship at Agape sweet to our God. Let's strive to worship with the utmost reverence and awe and fear of God in total obedience to His Word. And let's use His gift of music to do all we can to amplify the joy in our hearts. And let's use every part of our being – including our mouths and hands and feet and knees to express what is in our hearts. And let us humble ourselves before Him that He might be supremely magnified.

Benediction: Psalm 100 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. 2Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.