

ECCLESIOLOGY 101
How the Local Church Lives and Breathes
Part 5: The Dynamic Range of Worship

This is our fifth installment of a series titled ECCLESIOLOGY 101.

AGAIN — The point of this series is not so much a to lay out a formal and systematic look at the nature of the church — but rather to get a street level, organic look at what the Bible has to say about the way the local church lives and breathes.

Let me start with this — There are three things that energize and direct the way we live and breathe as individuals and as a local church:

A PASSION FOR the WORSHIP of God
A PASSION FOR the WORD of God
A PASSION FOR the MISSION of God

When someone looks at this collection of believers, they should be able to see our passion for these things in the time, energy and resources we commit to them. And we trust that by the Lord's enabling we will see maturity and increased fruitfulness in each of them.

Tonight, I want us to look at how the local church lives and breathes in corporate worship.

I'll start by defining what I mean when I say that at the heart of Metro is a PASSION FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD. Here's what that does not mean: I'm not talking about people being passionate about *worshipping* or being excited about their favorite worship leader, or great musicianship, or great lights and projection, singing their favorite songs. THAT is what moves a lot of people to gather on a Sunday. Take those elements away and there's not so much "passion".

When I say that at the heart of my life — at the heart of this local church — is a PASSION FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD I mean

A passion for God to be worshipped — A passion for men and women to see that Jesus is the God of infinite worth, worthy of pouring out to Him alone all that we are, all that we do, all that we can ever hope to become.

Worship is more than singing songs! Worship is **living** our life **individually** and **corporately** as **continuous** living sacrifices **to the glory of** Jesus.

*Romans 11:36–12:1 “To him be **the glory** forever. Amen. I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living **sacrifice**, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual **worship**.”*

Our PASSION FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD **informs** the way we live and breathe when we are scattered outside of these walls. Our PASSION FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD informs **invades** everything we do. It is the WHY for what we do!

Our PASSION FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD invades everywhere we go. It transforms the SECULAR into the SACRED. We could spend a night thinking and talking about that.

DON'T MISS THIS — Our PASSION FOR THE MISSION OF GOD — to reach the WORLD for God — **flows from** the passion to see God **receive** worship. Turn with me to **Revelation 5:9**

Revelation 5:9 And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation,

We are passionate to see men and women — not just coming to church; not just wanting to be a part of a subculture that holds values they like, or includes people they want to be around — we are passionate to see men and women rescued from idols and **redeemed** to that which they were **created** for — the worship of God.

WE NEED TO SEE that our PASSION FOR THE WORSHIP OF GOD of God is inextricably tied to our PASSION FOR THE WORD OF GOD because:

1. The God whom we worship — His nature, His attributes (omniscience, omnipotence, His mercy, unfailing, redeeming love, His amazing grace) everything about Him that reveals to us His infinite worth — is found in His Word.

2. The **expression** of our worship — the dynamic range of how we **express** worship and praise is **defined** in His Word. THIS BOOK is NOT about YOU — it is about GOD. THIS BOOK is NOT written TO you. It is written FOR you! I am praying that church culture will be rescued from the anthropocentric view of the Bible that is prevailing today — rescued from seeing the Bible as a an encyclopedia of helpful hints for the life they want have

I've been wanting and waiting to talk about and think about how we live and breathe in regard to the expression of worship. The Lord confirmed this last week as we finished reading through the Psalms last week — in particular in Psalm 145.

I don't think we really understand the EXPRESSION of praise and worship as it was understood by the believer in Bible times. Because of that — **our expression** of praise and worship falls short of what the Scriptures say. **Many** are ignorant about what the Scriptures have to say about the EXPRESSION of our worship. Those who do know what the Scriptures say about the expression of worship are reticent **because** they have **misconceptions** — **fears**. *"Oh, I don't want to get emotional in front of others. "I don't want to get into emotionalism."* NEITHER DO I!

Emotional-ism is emotion for the sake of being emotional. **Emotional-ism** makes an emotional experience the desired outcome!

We should not be seeking a desired emotional outcome in corporate worship. **But we should** desire **our EXPRESSION** of praise and worship **to look like** that which is recorded in the Scriptures. We should want to **be EXPRESSING worship** to God in a way that is **worthy of God**.

Psalm 145 is the last psalm attributed to David in the collection of Psalms.

QUOTE: James Montgomery Boice — *Psalm 145 is indeed a monumental praise psalm, a fit summary of all David had learned about God during a long lifetime of following hard after the Almighty*

Here's the one verse summary —

Psalm 145:3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

In the whole of the psalm we find David speaking of the greatness of God and then describing the **dynamic range of expression** that revelation of God produces in the believer

Psalm 145:5 On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

David said — **I will meditate** — He would think intently and at length — he had one thing that occupied his attention. What was that thing that provoked intense, prolonged, singular attention? GOD!

1. He thought intently and at length on God's glorious splendor.

kâbôd = weight, weightiness. It is the word used in reference to the visible and tangible expression of God and the perfection of His of God's nature and attributes. The Bible says that this glory — this expression of God — is **so** glorious — that it is unapproachable. We could never survive this glorious splendor in these bodies.

2. He thought intently and at length on God's steadfast love.

Psalm 145:8 The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

Look at the adjective David used to describe relentless, unending, constantly pursuing covenant love of God

abounding — It carries the sense of remarkable; out of the ordinary in degree and magnitude of effect.

WORSHIP is the way men and women live and breathe in response to God's mighty acts (v.4) — the glorious splendor of His majesty (His Kingship) and His awesome deeds and His greatness (v.5) — His abundant goodness (and righteousness (v. 7) — His grace, mercy, patience (v.8) — His faithfulness to His Word (v. 13) — the glory and the splendor of His Kingdom (v.11 and v.13) — His provision (v. 16) — His nearness to those who call on Him in truth (v.18) preserves us.

HERE'S THE DEAL — **From** all God has **revealed** to David about Himself — David describes (by inspiration of the Holy Spirit) how he responded, and how we should respond to the infinite worth of God. He is careful to describe the dynamic range of our response.

Words Mean Something — In our English translations of the Bible we come across the word *praise* or the word *worship* and we impose our cultural understanding of those words on the dynamic range we give to our expression of praise and worship. "*Praise is an up-tempo song — Worship is a slow, serious song.*" But David used very specific words to describe God and to describe the way we should respond to Him.

¹ **I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.**

Extol = lift up high above. This is not merely done in the form of worship in music! It is the way we live and breathe in every day life. Our lives say that God matters, and compared to Him — nothing else matters. God is extoled, elevated and lifted high in our accomplishments and even the way we respond to failure and setbacks. God, His work, His mission, His story, His glory — His ultimate importance — is behind the way we use our time, talents and treasure.

But like we learned about prayer — worship alone moves to worship together. As worshippers we are not fully ourselves by ourselves. When we do gather as the local church — we do **extol** God in corporate worship. With lyric and melody, we sing His name, make much of His name, declare His name to be without rival or equal (what a Beautiful name... Yours is the Name above all names).

¹ I will extol you, my God and King, and **bless your name forever and ever.**

bless = speak words of excellence about God; bend the knees.

² Every day I will **bless you and praise your name forever and ever.**

praise = hâlal — It is used 166 times in 139 verses of the Old Testament. It means to *be clear* (orig. of sound, but usually of color); to *shine*; hence to *make a show*, to *boast*; and thus to *be* (clamorously) *foolish*; to *rave*;... celebrate,¹

When the reader in David's day read Psalm 145:2 he or she didn't think "up-tempo tune." **I will bless you and I will make a show, boast about; even to the point of being** (clamorously) *foolish in raving about your name*. Think David dancing before the ark.

This is not a "look at me" kind of behavior — because praise is directed God ward. It isn't a matter of making a show so that people will look at you. **HE is the object** of our boasting — we boast **in** the greatness of **His name**. We boast in God.

Psalm 44:8 In God we boast all the day long.

The word *boast* there is **hâlal**. In God we **rave** all the day long. *We will boast in God to the point of being clamorous — we will rave over Him.*

⁴ One generation shall **commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.**

Commend = to sing praises. Singing praises about the saving work of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit! The truth of the Gospel is communicated by believing men and women as they sing together about the God

¹ Strong, J. (2009). *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 33). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

they know personally — the God who works — the God who has worked in their own lives.

The great hymns did that. The great songs of the church today do that. They center on GOD — His work — His work experienced personally.

⁵ **On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.**

Engaging our minds to think intently on what we are singing

⁶ **They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.**

declare = Count, recount, write (as in taking inventory). When we gather like this our worship in song should be a time when we personally count, recount and declare our personal inventory of what we know about the greatness of God.

⁷ **They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.**

Pour forth = gush; allow to gush forth; ferment.

Do our lives individually gush forth the fame of God's abundant goodness? Do we, individually, **allow** the fame of His goodness to gush forth? Is the abundant goodness of God like a priceless vintage fermenting in our hearts and our lives?

Like prayer — this *gushing* moves from alone to together. When we gather are we a collection of individuals who **together** gush forth the fame of His abundant goodness? When you are with these men and women do you **allow** the fame of His goodness to gush forth?

and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.

sing aloud = produce a song with the voice as a response of joy — **shout** for joy; **sing** for joy.

This cannot be rote or routine. It is a life — it is a joy realized before gathering that finds expression in a collection of lives that are sharing in the same joy.

Let's carry all of that with us as we look at how the divinely inspired poets and songwriters of the Psalms used words that unpack how dynamic our response should be to Who God is and what God has done.

One of the words that is **used 53 times** in the Old Testament — and is translated into our English language as "PRAISE", is the Hebrew word, **Yadah**.

This Hebrew word means *"to use the hand - to revere or worship."*

When David used this word he meant it — and his readers understood it — to mean *"Worship and praise God with extended hands."*

POINT: There is nothing wrong with using your body to express what's in your heart. The scriptures tell us to do that.

Psalm 63:3–4 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, My lips shall praise You. ⁴ Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name.

For some — this an uncomfortable dynamic range of expression. Know this — First of all, I can't make you do anything. But I can encourage myself and you to embrace the Biblical dynamic range of expression. Rather than say, "That's just not who I am" we need to consider who the Lord wants us to be — how HE wants us express worship.

Secondly — **it's not my idea** that we raise our hands — it's God's. We just need to see that it's there.

Turn with me to **Psalm 33:2**.

Psalm 33:2 Give thanks to the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings!

Give thanks = Yadah means *to extend the hand to revere and to worship*. Rather than use the English, **give thanks**, let's read it as they would have understood it in David's day.

“To the accompaniment of music I will give thanks to the Lord with extended hands.”

HERE’S THE POINT — You don’t have to be singing a song that says, “I will lift my hands,” in order to be lifting your hands in praising the Lord.

For the worshipper of David’s day, PRAISE was not the singing of an upbeat chorus song. They knew that **Yadah** meant extending their hands in the worship of God.

LET’S REVISIT the word **hâlal** — Like I said, it’s is used 166 times in 139 verses of the Old Testament. Look at **Psalm 148**

Psalm 148:1–5; 11-14 Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights! ² Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his hosts! ³ Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! ⁴ Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens! ⁵ Let them praise the name of the Lord! For he commanded and they were created..... ¹¹ Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth! ¹² Young men and maidens together, old men and children! ¹³ Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his majesty is above earth and heaven.

Every time you read the word *praise* in this Psalm it’s the Hebrew word **hâlal**. Someone was REALLY excited about God when he wrote that psalm!

When I read **Psalm 148 -150** it makes me wonder what kind of music these psalms were written to. It also makes me wonder what David and the psalmists were experiencing with God to have been that ecstatic in the EXPRESSION of their worship.

BIG IDEA — There is a place for boasting in, celebrating and raving over God. But **not** merely for the sake of being clamorous — making a show.

The Holy Spirit is so INFINITELY WISE in His choice of words. The Holy Spirit knew that if we were just left at boasting and being clamorously foolish — raving and celebrating — that we’d go wrong, we’d miss the point.

He chose THIS word because this word also carries the meaning of a profoundly deep sense of intimacy. **Hâlal** also means *to give in marriage*. Marriage is profoundly intimate.

And so we have this blend of the **profound intimacy** with this radical **expression of celebration**.

Some people get off on just the raving — They get off on the decibel level and the production and they think — *“Oh man that was really in the spirit.”* But there was never any intimacy with God. It wasn’t something that was born out of intimacy with God.

But — if it’s a **sincere response** to who God is and what He has done; if it’s **born out of intimacy** with God — that is a divinely ordained, genuine EXPRESSION and POURING OUT unto Him **BECAUSE** God is worth raving about — boasting in — being clamorous.

Nehemiah 12:40–43** So both choirs of those who gave thanks stood in the house of God, and I and half of the officials with me; ⁴¹ and the priests Eliakim, Maaseiah, Miniamin, Micaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets; ⁴² and Maaseiah, Shemaiah, Eleazar, Uzzi, Jehohanan, Malchijah, Elam, and Ezer. And the singers sang with Jezrahiah as their leader. ⁴³ And they offered great sacrifices that day and **rejoiced, for God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and children also rejoiced. And the joy of Jerusalem was heard far away.

Now, let me ask you this — Have you ever been at a service and had a **hard time hearing** people rejoicing on just the other side of the room?

Some might say — *“Well it is first service. It’s kind of a little mellow, a little slow.”*
“You know, we’re coming in earlier, we had to get up earlier.”

But that’s why it is CRITICAL that we do what David did in **Psalm 103**. We need to get tuned up for worship. NOT **psyched** up – BUT **TUNED** up.

We tune our hearts. *Bless the Lord O my soul... Let all that is within me.... Forget not His benefits....* We stir our hearts to think of who He is and what He's done for us.

And **the response** of our hearts to WHO He is and WHAT He has DONE should result in an EXPRESSION of worship that engages *ALL that is within me to bless His Holy Name!*

Now can you begin to see that when we read the word PRAISE in our Bibles it does NOT just mean that we're going to have a little time of singing. It is EXPRESSING my praise and love to God in RESPONSE to who He is and what he does. I want to encourage you — you don't have to wait for us to say or sing, "let's lift our hands."

Though we *worship God in spirit* — God has given us arms, and hands, and voices. If they were useless and irrelevant to praise — God would have outfitted us with something else.

May I challenge you in this — When the revelation of God and your experience of Him moves you to rave, have at it! Do it! It's Biblical!

PRAISE is one part of the dynamic range of corporate worship.

The other is WORSHIP

Praise and Worship have much in common. In both — we're the **givers**, God's the **receiver**. Both are the response of my spirit — mind — will — emotions and body — to who God is and what He does. But there is a difference. And it's not what many in today's Christian culture think it to be.

A lot of people interpret this word in light of church culture: They read the word *worship* in their English Bible and think: *slow, serious song*. That is not the dynamic expression the inspired author had in mind — it's not what their readers thought. They understood it to be about the **manner** of **EXPRESSION** that **reflects** an **ATTITUDE** of heart.

Psalm 95:6 Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!

worship = *shachah* /shaw·**khaw**/] v. A primitive root; TWOT 2360; GK 8817; 172 occurrences; AV translates as “worship” 99 times, “bow” 31 times, “bow down” 18 times, “obeisance” nine times, “reverence” five times, “fall down” three times²

Notice the human posture here. The **posture** is an **EXPRESSION** of reverence.

*Out of **reverence** — out of **wonder** and **awe** over who God is — I’m going to **bow down** before Him; I’m going to **fall flat** — I will crouch before Him.*

Psa 22:27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations shall **worship before you..**

There’s our Hebrew word — “*All of the families of the nations shall **worship** before you.. be **prostrate in homage** before God, they’ll **bow down** and **fall flat before**, and **do reverence**, and worship before Thee.*”

Psalm 29:2 Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; **worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness.**

***Bow down** before the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*

BIG IDEA — WORSHIP is the **EXPRESSION** of the heart that says *I’m not worthy to **STAND*** before you God.”

QUESTION — Has that ever been your experience of God? Have you ever been before the Lord **EXPRESSION** to Him your love and adoration — and perhaps in the moment God is ministering to you things about who He is — and what He has done for you — and you have been so overwhelmed by His nature, and His

² Strong, J. (1995). *Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*. Woodside Bible Fellowship.

beauty, and His attributes that you just feel like you **CAN'T** stand — and that you should be kneeling?

Well then — kneel! Because it is a **Biblical form of EXPRESSING** your reverence of God. It's should NEVER be a matter of you saying — *“Hey, check me out, I'm kneeling. I'm so spiritual. I bring my own personal kneeler to church, because I have to worship God all the time.”*

THIS IS IMPORTANT — Sometimes our experience of God does not lead to this response. And again — *going through the motions of kneeling does not qualify as worship.* **However** — I do believe that God honors the heart of the person who says, *“I don't feel like bowing before You — But I do know that you are God — and you deserve my worship — So I will kneel before you.”*

When it comes from **that** attitude and **that** heart — that's not being hypocritical — that's being honest with God. You're not denying His nature. You're not denying His person. You're not selling Him short of the worship that he deserves because of what you **don't** feel.

***Nehemiah 8:6** And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.*

In the New Testament — the Greek word translated *worship* is Proskuneo. To turn and face with the intention of kissing

CLOSE

I pray that as a result of this simple time in God's Word that we would understand that WHO God is and WHAT He has done is the essence of worship. I pray that we would really **evaluate the WHY of your EXPRESSION** of praise and worship. **Is it for God to receive, or for you to feel?**

I pray that we will allow the Holy Spirit to set these matters of the heart straight so that individually and corporately will fall within the dynamic range of expression found in the Word of God.

Ask God to deal with any **personal inhibitions** that have been keeping you from EXPRESSING worship and praise in a way defined in Scripture.

If you insist upon taking the position of — *“Well, that’s just not me, so I’m not going to do that”* — please remember that God, who is the One receiving from us — is the one getting shorted.

It is all a matter of saying — *“God I want to give you what You deserve.... Give it as you have prescribed.”*

As **you** EXPRESS worship to God in a Biblical way, people around you begin to catch on. As they are surrounded by men and women EXPRESSING love and adoration of Jesus in a Biblical way — as they see that it’s from a sincere heart and not a show — they’ll be freed up.

REMEMBER – IT’S ALL ABOUT JESUS.