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SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

VIBRANT WORSHIP

Here We Grow, Part 3

> The garment of praise is something you put on, not something you wait to feel. When we show up, take a posture of worship and participate, we change the atmosphere for the people around us and position ourselves to receive from God.

MAIN TEXT
Isaiah 61:1-3

FIRST PREACHED
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SERIES
Here We Grow, Week 3 of 3

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. Vibrant worship requires physical presence. Showing up matters, and how you show up matters just as much: ready to receive and ready to respond.
2. Vibrant worship revolves around physical posture. Every church expects some physical response, and a Spirit-filled church ought to worship like one.
3. Five vibrant worship postures that impact the atmosphere: sing, clap, lift your hands, shout, and preach back.
4. Vibrant worship creates a physical predisposition. Participating in the atmosphere positions you to receive from the Lord, and it is an offering to God and a benefit to the person standing next to you.



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READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/here-we-grow-part-3

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message closes a three-week series called Here We Grow, framed as a church-wide staff meeting. In a staff meeting the pastor teaches, tells the team where we are going, and tells them what he needs from them. This is the third week: what I need from you. And the ask is not money or volunteers. It is vibrant worship.

Be clear early that this is not a message about worship in the full sense. How we live and how we give say more about who we worship than anything that happens on a Sunday. This is about the atmosphere of a church service, and every person's part in it.

The structure is three points that all start with "physical": presence, posture and predisposition. Point two carries most of the weight, with five postures: sing, clap, lift your hands, shout and preach back. Lead the congregation in each posture as you teach it.

Ezra 3 connects to last week's message: it is the scene where the returned exiles lay the foundation of the rebuilt temple, the house whose latter glory would be greater than the former.

Much of the color here comes from the preacher's own story as a bass player and worship leader. Substitute your own story of being positioned to receive.

Introduction

We are in a series called Here We Grow, and we have treated these weeks like one big staff meeting. Two weeks ago I taught you. Last week I told you where we are going. This week I am going to tell you what I need from you.

I could preach on giving. We need you to be generous, and remember: you never give to your pastor or the church. You give to the Lord, and that is how you release the blessing. But that is not this message.

I could preach on serving. We need you there too, especially in kids ministry. When we arrived, we did not know from week to week whether any children would come; we had plans for what to do if none showed up. Last week we had 35 kids. So over the next few weeks, every area of kids ministry except the nursery will be run by volunteers, and we will pay nursery workers. Parents of babies, especially first-time guests, need to know their little ones are in professional hands. (By the time they are four, it's "Sure, Charles Manson, here you go, they'll be fine for an hour.") And it frees our good nursery volunteers to serve in other kids areas. But that is not this message either.

Today I need you to give me vibrant worship.

I am not talking about worship proper. If I were, I would tell you that the way you live and the way you give reflect your worship more than anything we do on a Sunday. It doesn't matter if we sing two songs or 28 songs: the way you live and the way you give tell us who you worship. Today I am talking about the atmosphere that happens when we come into the room together.

And let me acknowledge how far we have come. The atmosphere of this room has come a thousand light years since I got here. You used to stare at me for 45 minutes; that is why I preached so short at first. Our worship is lively now. But we have a long way to go. It is the week before Back to Church Sunday, and we are a few months away from a major pivot in our church. We have to take the next step together.

Put On the Garment of Praise

For years I was the worship guy, 10 to 12 years behind the keyboard. Funny enough, I rarely preach on it. But one passage has shaped how I see corporate worship. It is the anointing that was upon Jesus.

> **ISAIAH 61:1-3 ESV**
>
> [1] The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; [2] to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; [3] to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

Look at verse 3. Every problem in this passage is internal: mourning, ashes, a faint spirit. And every solution is **something you put on**: a beautiful headdress, the oil of gladness, "the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit" (Isaiah 61:3).

Participation in worship is not going to come to you. People say, "I don't want to do it when the worship leader tells me. I want to do it when I feel it." **The feeling ain't coming.** You can't walk through hell six days a week, walk in here, sing a couple of songs and suddenly feel like magnifying the Lord. There is a reason we crucify the flesh: what we feel like doing often isn't what we ought to do. Nobody on this platform is good enough to inspire you into it. At some point you make a decision: "I'm going to participate." You put it on.

Illustration: the water balloon. We have been taught that worship is just you and the Lord during a few songs. But your participation is like a water balloon. When it hits, it splatters and touches everything around it. When you lift your hands and your voice, it affects the atmosphere in a way that can change people's lives. **Often God doesn't need your worship in the service as much as the people sitting in the room need it.** Some came in so heavy and defeated that they have nothing to give. They need your praise to jump over onto them.

And it benefits you, too. We will get there.

1. Vibrant Worship Requires Physical Presence

Showing up matters. As they say in business, you can't go up unless you show up.

> **HEBREWS 10:24-25** ESV
>
> [24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Now is not the time to be away from church. Now is the time to show up. (Everyone I have known who said they didn't need church and could hear from the Lord on their own turned out a little weird and dysfunctional. I want to be like the people who show up.)

Illustration: the executive coach. Years ago an executive coach asked me a question I found annoying at first: "How do you show up?" Showing up is one thing. How you show up is another.

- Do you show up **ready to receive**?
- Do you show up **ready to respond**?

If the plan got thrown out, the glory of God fell and people were being healed and delivered and restored, would you be ready? Or would you walk in saying, "I liked it better the way it used to be," it's too hot, it's too cold, it's too bright, it's too dark?

In Luke 15, the prodigal son comes home and his father throws a party. His older brother comes in from the field, hears the music, and gets angry. "But he was angry and refused to go in" (Luke 15:28). There is plenty of conjecture about why, but here is one reason: he wasn't in the house. **Nobody is upset when they're in the house.** You have to get where the party's going on. (We used to say, "There ain't no party like a Holy Ghost party, 'cause a Holy Ghost party don't stop.")

Have you decided to show up ready to receive?

2. Vibrant Worship Revolves Around Physical Posture

This is the heart of the message. Lean in.

Every church expects some physical posture in worship. Catholics make the sign of the cross. Methodists walk to the front for communion. Baptists line up for the potluck. **We are an openly Spirit-filled church, and we ought to worship like one.** This is a church, not a seminar. We are going to be a church for people who like to have church.

No accessories included. Some toys come with all the accessories and some don't. We are a no-accessories-included worship experience: no tambourines, no shofars, no flags, no banners, no ribbons, no weapons. (A friend once led worship at a church where a man took a decorative sword off the communion table, worshiped with it, then knelt before the senior pastor and held it up. The pastor knighted him.) Those things are not wrong in themselves. But they usually become a distraction that turns

into a discussion, and there is a fine line between what we bring into worship and an idol. If you can't worship without your tambourine, that might be a problem.

But we will be an actively involved worshiping church. Ezra 3 shows what that looks like. The exiles have come home, and the foundation of the rebuilt temple is laid:

> **EZRA 3:11-13** ESV
>
> 11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

People came in with a spirit of heaviness, and there was a garment of praise. The sound of joy and the sound of weeping could not be told apart, and it was heard far away.

A preacher once told me that worship is vertical, between you and the Lord, and praise is horizontal: it lets everyone know that God is good. I want people driving down Shelton Beach Road to say, "What is happening in that church?"

FIVE VIBRANT WORSHIP POSTURES THAT IMPACT THE ATMOSPHERE

1. Sing.

> **PSALM 100:2** ESV
>
> 2 Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

Why do we sing? Because the Bible says so. Not because it's American Idol, as one online critic complained when we "sang too many songs." We sing because the Bible says so.

And **singing is discipleship.**

> **COLOSSIANS 3:16** ESV
>
> 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Singing gets the Word down inside you. We used to sing simple choruses like "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it." All hell could be breaking loose, and you might not know the reference, but you had it in your spirit: "he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6). Newer songs do it too. You may be about to lose your job, but you are singing that Christ is your firm foundation, and the Bible says we are "receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken" (Hebrews 12:28).

2. Clap.

> PSALM 47:1 ESV
>
> To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. [1] Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!

We clap because the Bible says so. It is a way we make noise and celebrate. If you can't praise in here, among people who are on the same page with you, how will you praise when you face the devil at work, or an $800 Alabama Power bill?

Even in the Spirit-filled churches of our region, I see some of the deadest worship around: Pentecostal people who don't clap, don't sing, don't dance. Thirty years ago we danced. Don't think we're past it. What if we were the church where the preacher got up one Sunday and told people to act like they're glad to be there, and it changed everything? It's a garment of praise. You have to put it on.

3. Lift your hands.

We lift our hands to surrender, and that is good. But we lift our hands because the Bible says so, and because He is worthy.

> LAMENTATIONS 3:41 ESV
>
> [41] Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:

This might be the breakthrough for some of you. It engages your faith. For some of you it is the biggest step you will take in your Pentecostal journey, and a warm-up to the Spirit-filled life. If you want the baptism in the Holy Spirit, that is a whole lot "weirder" than lifting your hands. This posture pleases the Lord.

4. Shout.

This is going to be a shouting church. When a shout is released, something breaks open. I can't fully explain it, but I have seen it again and again.

Be honest about the room: I have a gift for turning unresponsive churches into an almost revival-pitched atmosphere, and I have had less result here than anywhere I have been. That may be on me as much as you. So if I can't demonstrate it, I'll teach it.

One of the Hebrew words for praise is *shabach*, to praise, laud or commend God. It is often taught as loud, unrestrained praise. I'm not asking for a polite "yeah." I'm asking for a shout you keep going until something happens.

The Pentecostal church has lost its shout. We have lost our involvement and our vibrancy. People usually find their way to a Spirit-filled church because nothing else worked. They don't need another Sunday school lesson or three points and a poem. They need something they can't get anywhere else. People should walk in and say, "They're kind of crazy, but they all seem happy."

Lead the church in a shout on a count of three. Then do it again, longer.

From the original notes: "Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous!" (Psalm 33:1)

5. Preach back.

> NEHEMIAH 8:5-6 ESV
>
> [5] And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. [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.

Ezra opened the book, and the people stood. He blessed the Lord, and they answered, "Amen, Amen." They responded. When there's good preaching, say amen. When the preaching gets confusing, say amen anyway, and receive whatever is in the atmosphere.

One caution: the message is already written. There's no comment section, only like buttons. Press the amen button.

WHY ALL THIS MATTERS

Some of you think, "You just want to feel good when you're preaching." Yes. But that's not why. A vibrant atmosphere affects other people. It is easy to doze through a sermon until the person beside you says, "Now that's good preaching." It breaks something in the room.

It is also **an offering to God.** Some of you serve, some of you give, but everybody can bring "a sacrifice of praise to God" (Hebrews 13:15). "I don't feel comfortable with that." That is what makes it a sacrifice.

And it benefits you. My preacher growing up used to say, "You've got to get under the spout where the glory comes out." When you participate and contribute to the atmosphere, it positions you to receive.

3. Vibrant Worship Creates a Physical Predisposition

Participation in vibrant worship predisposes you for blessing.

Illustration: the bass player. (Tell it in parts.)

- I got saved at 12 at a Bible study. I was not raised in church. Within a few weeks of watching people lift their hands, I thought, "I'd better get in on this." Once I was in church regularly, I went down front to worship every Sunday and stood in the same spot, where the platform ended at the steps. Every worship instruction given has a prophetic undertone.
- Right after I got saved I started playing bass. My home church gave me no opportunity to play, so on Sundays I stayed down front in worship. Meanwhile, doors opened outside the church. (Sometimes a season of no opportunity is your best training ground.)
- My hero was Victor Wooten, the bassist many know from his "Amazing Grace" solo. He had a technique called the double thump. I could do a lot on the bass, but I could never get that.

- In October 2003, five or six years into playing, I went to his concert in Birmingham. I went down front early to look at his gear, turned around, and was trapped by hundreds of people. I was standing right where I always stood to worship. He walked out, started playing, and without my touching the instrument again, the double thump was unlocked.
- That technique opened every door in my life. I even met my wife because of the bass: it got me the job at her church.

I wanted something I couldn't attain. I was so used to standing in that place that I was physically predisposed for blessing. The same position where I worshiped was the position where I received. **When you participate in vibrant worship, you are positioned, predisposed, to receive from the Lord.**

Conclusion: Becoming a Church of Vibrant Worship

(Have the keyboard player come up.)

The atmosphere has improved, but we have to go further. Leading from the platform, I feel torn: trying to play, sing, clap for you and push the atmosphere all at once. All I can do is teach it. We have to decide to become this kind of church, because this is the kind of church that will make a difference in our area. In many places there is little difference anymore between the worship in a Baptist church, a non-denominational church and a Spirit-filled church.

I am not unsympathetic, especially to the men. I was a worship leader for years. When I stepped back down to the floor, I got comfortable not participating. I critiqued everything, didn't sing, didn't lift my hands. I was as dead and dry as anyone. Then one Sunday around a holiday, my daughter Jocelyn was in the service beside me. I wanted my kids to experience the power and touch of God, and I was about to dead-dry worship my way through the service. So I decided, "I'm going to engage." I lifted my hands and sang. Ministry doors began opening that hadn't opened in years. In one week we raised our whole ministry budget for my travel as an evangelist. Something happens when you give to that atmosphere.

I know it feels uncomfortable. What if they hear you sing? What if you bump someone when you lift your hands? What if you clap off beat? But maybe the person next to you hears you, and it touches them, and something breaks out. **Worship for you is an opportunity. Worship for the person standing next to you could be life and death.** People are rarely saved because the apologetics were airtight. They are saved because of the anointing, the atmosphere.

Response: have everyone stand. Worship at the level you haven't gone to yet. If you're a hand lifter, lift your hands. If you're a singer, sing. If you've never shouted, shout. Then hold it from here on out. The more a worship leader has to pull on a room, the weirder it gets. When you just do it, that's not weird; it is vibrant and responsive.

I don't do weird. These five postures are the bubble we will live in. But if I ever ask you to do something unusual, do it, because something is about to break out.

I feel like Caleb: "we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). Let's be the most energetic, supernatural Pentecostal worship experience in the Mobile region.



ABOUT

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