

Communal Worship

Anchored in Worship series week #2

by Chris Famisaran

Thank you, Ben. Father in heaven, as we continue in our series on anchored in worship, lead and guide us in Jesus name. Amen.

Good morning, everybody. How y'all doing? Good. So last week we began our series on being anchored in worship. Why is it? Why should we hold fast to worship? Last week, we talked about the fact of having both personal and family worship. Not only do we need to worship God individually, but also as parents, as family members, to ensure that your children also know God. It's good to spend time, even just in prayer, as a family.

Now, back in 2007, Christian. I don't know how to pronounce his name. Wyman Wiemann wrote an article in what's it called? The American Scholar, called Gazing into the Abyss. And on the 39th birthday, he received some news, some bad news. He was sick. And as he writes, he says, it took a bit of time travel and a series of wretched tests to get specific diagnosis. But by then, the main blow had been delivered. And that main blow is what matters. I have an incurable cancer in my blood. The disease is as rare as it is mysterious, killing some people quickly and sparing others for decades, afflicting some with all manner of miseries and disabilities, and leaving others relatively healthy until the end. Of all of the doctors I have seen, not one has been willing to venture even into a vague prognosis. And then one morning, we found ourselves going to church. Found ourselves. That's exactly what it felt like in both senses and of the phrase, as if some impulse in each of us had finally been catalyzed into action, that we were casting aside the paper and moving toward the door with barely a word between us. And as if once inside the church, we were discovering exactly where and who we were meant to be. The first service was excruciating in that it seemed to tear all of the wounds wide open. And it was profoundly comforting in that it seemed to offer the only possible balm. So now I bow my head and try to pray in the mornings, because to once feel the presence of God is to feel his absence all the more acutely. I

go to church because faith is not a state of mind, but an action in the world, a movement toward the world. How changed this one hour of the week is for me and how I cherish it.

Christian was writing this in the backdrop of receiving a diagnosis, that essentially he'd been given a death sentence and he didn't know when that would happen. Editors note he is still alive, and he is a survivor of this rare blood cancer. It remains in remission. But it may. It may come back. He serves as a professor, I believe, at Yale Divinity School. But Christian wrote this in the backdrop of, well, how do I face this disease? And it was by going to church, being surrounded by brothers and sisters in faith, not only to worship God, but to share, to rejoice together as a church family. He had his tribe. And throughout the history, God's people have gathered together regularly to worship, to come together, to sing, to pray, to study. If you think back after crossing the Red Sea, what did they do? They broke out in song. In Leviticus 23, it talks about how God instructed them. Here are ways that you can worship the feast, feast and times of gathering. I think of Luke 4. When Jesus walks into the synagogue, as was his custom, as it says, and he stood up to read. They would regularly gather together. He would go into the synagogues, teaching and preaching and sometimes healing people, much to the consternation of the leaders of the time. You find Paul and all of the disciples, as was their custom, going into the synagogues regularly to have conversations, to worship.

Today I want to talk a little bit. Why is it important that we have communal worship? Why do we gather together? Why are we here right now worshipping? I'd like to go to Psalm 100. Okay. And these are some of the passages. Hopefully we can get to as many today.

But I want to start with Psalm 100. Well known Psalm, short Psalm, but potent. Okay, we all there? All right. Psalm 100. It says, Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are His. We are his people. The sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is

good and his love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.

What is at the heart of this particular psalm? Thanksgiving. Yes, but it's also simply about worship. Shout for joy to the Lord. Worship with gladness and notice as well. In verse three, it says, know the Lord is God. It is he who made me. Or what does it say? It says, us, for it is he who made us. And we are. We are His. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. The psalmist didn't write this psalm for himself or herself. It was for the community. And so the psalmist is sharing and explaining, hey, let us come together. When we go to the synagogue at the time or when we, you know, as we gather in the courts of God. May we worship God. God's people regularly got together to worship. And so one of the other things that I love about worshipping. Okay, why do we worship as a community? Number one, is we worship together as one body. We come together and recognize that we want to not only worship God individually, but there's just something. As I was listening to you all, I just was quiet and I was listening. Man, it sounds so good when we are all in unison, especially when it comes to the hymn. The hymn is one of my favorite parts of the service. Not that the four main worship songs that we sing are any less, but I love because when we listen and we are singing, it just. We are in harmony and sync. Not that we're before, but we. We come together. And I. It's with clarity that I hear worshipping together now. When we worship together, we strengthen our bonds between believers. I almost feel like we're just a tribe. We come together like Downey Church. This is my tribe. Because what has been instilled in this church of love, of grace, of acceptance? Who wants that? Everybody. Right? And there's something deep and bonding when we come together. Where it says in Ephesians, actually, let's go to Ephesians, chapter 5, Ephesians, chapter 5, ephesians 5, verse 19 and 20. It says, speaking together, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from the heart to the Lord. Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. One of the clearest examples, when we get together, hey, let us sing. There's something uniting about music. Or even at the very beginning of the service when we read scripture together. But also, why do we also meet? Because we grow together and keep each other, in a sense, accountable. Not to, hey, I'm

going to watch out for you and watch everything that you do. We're not trying to be zealous like that, but to check on one another. Why did Christian want to come to church? Because he knew that he would be met with love, grace, and to have a temporary relief of the struggle that he was experiencing physically. Let's jump to Colossians. Let's move over to Colossians chapter 3, verses 15 and 17. Colossians 3, verses 15 and 17. 15, 17. It says, Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. Since as members of what one body you were called to peace and be what? Thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another. With all the wisdom through psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. There's something about coming together in your experience with God, growing together. I love to. When we know each other, when somebody's feeling down, what do we do? We ask, hey, how are you doing? You get to know somebody well enough, they get to pick up on who you are. One of the things I know I've mentioned this before, but when I've been tired and everything, guess who asks me? Johnny. He knows when I say, I'm fine, I'm okay. How many of you? When somebody asks, how are you doing? What's the resounding answer? I'm fine. I'm okay. I'm good. But are we really okay? Are we all really fine? And sometimes we lie. We say, I'm fine. But deep down, sometimes I'm at my last wits end with my child. My boss is being ridiculous. I'm frustrated with this. I'm tired. I just want to get a good night's rest. And sometimes there's something about just coming together and also rejoicing and comforting one another. I know that I can come here, all of us can come here and we can share with one another. I've had a bad week. Can we pray about it? I've been given a diagnosis. Can we pray about it? When we're struggling, can somebody listen? But we grow together as well. Kind of going back to Colossians, where let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish, and with all wisdom through Psalms, as we, as we, as we study together, whether it's in Sabbath school, small groups, or even in this setting right now, as we challenge one another, not challenge, but to exhort, to sharpen one another, to grow in word through the Scriptures we learn and grow together. And one of the things especially like for instance, in small groups, you know, I've been studying Scripture for most of my life. But even when we go through small

groups, there's always some kernel, some nugget that I always take away from somebody who makes a. Who shares something from their perspective. And I have a much deeper, more enriching experience by understanding scripture from a different perspective. But being united together in church is also important. We rejoice and we comfort one another. So last verse. I actually want to go to. It wasn't here, but let's go back to Acts I didn't put this in there, but let's go here. Acts, chapter two. Acts, chapter two, verse 42. Now, taken the context before the Holy Spirit, that which had been prophesied in Joel and through scriptures, comes down and hits the disciples. And there are many people who. They come from different tribes, different areas, different languages, all of a sudden can understand everything that they are seeing. And Peter stands up, and it's where he really takes on the mantle of leadership. And the church begins to grow.

And here they say in verse 42, it says they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching. Okay, so they studied together. Check. And the fellowship. Don't necessarily do it every Sabbath, but we regularly meet together. Check. Of breaking the bread, do we pray regularly? Check. By the way, ladies, if you were not here earlier today, there's a new women's prayer group on Wednesdays. Every other Wednesday. See Juanita. Okay. We devote ourselves to prayer. And really, this is the basics of church scripture. Studying of scripture, the fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. These four key things are attributes, in my opinion, of a healthy church. Are we doing that together?

Not necessarily even here, but I would encourage you find somebody you don't know well in the church and say, hey, would you like to go to lunch sometime or would you like to come over for lunch? What can I do? How can I pray for you? I don't know you. Well, what's your name? What can I do? What can I pray for? And as we come together, we uplift one another. As we listen to each other, as we hear one another, our bonds, our tribe, our. Grows stronger. Amen.

Now, corporate worship. Corporate worship is a regular and gracious reminder that it's not about you. You've been born into a life that is a celebration of another, and that "of another" is that of Jesus. But also, when we come together, we're reminded that we're not on our own, we're not by ourselves.

We have brothers and sisters that we can go to, we can rely on, we can trust, we can share, and we can do life together. And so it's important that we have deep, strong bonds in the church.

But I would also caution, don't let that be your only relationships. Make relationships outside of the church. Because if we don't, then what happens? Will God's word spread? It won't. It's important that we try to have as many relationships outside of the church as possible. Some may be closer, some may not be, but make friends. Some of my closest relationships are people who weren't even in the church. And I'm not there to be their friend just because I'm trying to turn them to Christ. I mean, yes, that is something that I hope and pray that eventually that will happen. But I have relationships with them because I truly love them and I value them. And it's important that as you make relationships and they see, why are you so different? They're going to want to know what makes you different. Well, one of the reasons is I love my church family. God has done so many wonderful things, and we get together and we're able to share together in a church community as we worship one another, worship God with one another. That'd be awkward. Oh, man, awkward. Now we come together. We share the highs and lows. We worship God. Worship is not about me. It's about us lifting our hands together in unison as we sing, sharing our hearts. So as you gather together, I want you to think about what is your favorite part of worshiping together as a church? Okay. What is your favorite part about worshiping together? Is there one part that's more important than the other? I'm going to let Bill handle that next week. All right. Is the sermon the most important part of the worship service? Is the music? Is it the prayer? Or is it. All of it is important.

And lastly, because we're a family and because we care, what can your church family pray for you personally? What can you share with somebody else? What in your heart? What is on your heart that you would love to have somebody pray for? Now, since you thought of that, I want you to find somebody before you go outside, okay? Try to find somebody maybe that you don't even know. Well, if you don't know that person, introduce yourself and ask, what can I pray for? What can I pray for? Why am I asking you? This is because if we don't take the time to even share the act of love, of praying for one another, how can we grow together as a community? This is just a simple step. And maybe if you

can't find somebody today, but you know, somebody, text or call them and say, hey, what can I pray for? But really what I want you to do is try to find somebody you don't know very well and reach out and just ask, what can I pray for? That seems simple enough. Does that feel very uncomfortable? Yes, that's why I'm intentionally asking. I know some of you are going to try to dart out of here, but I truly want to see brothers and sisters, if we can't pray for one another, how can we stand together? And how can God's church grow if we're not looking out for one another. Amen. So don't be afraid and you don't have to share something. What's something very simple that they can pray for. All right. So you don't have to limit to one person. By the way, you can ask 10 different people if you would like to pray for. But reach out. Let us come together as we study together, as we grow together, as we ask questions, as we help one another to learn. But also just as important as we love and care and listen to one another. Key word listen. May our church grow and that people will know God by our love one another.

Father in heaven thank you Lord for you are good and your mercy endures forever as we regularly come together and worship. Lord, may we see the vision that you have for this church as we continue to be Christ centered, to worship, to love and to care and be rooted in scripture. Lord help us to see, give us conviction and Lord every day lead and guide us that we may be your faithful ambassadors in Jesus name. Everybody said Amen.

Grace and peace.