

Rediscovering Worship

Physical Expression and Worship

*“For ye are bought with a price:
therefore glorify God in your body,
and in your spirit, which are God's.”
I Corinthians 6:20*

Introduction

- There has been great debate through the centuries as to how a Christian can properly and acceptably express their worship through physical expression.
- A false dichotomy is often presented that says you either encourage physical expression or you forbid it. The truth is somewhere in the middle of these two extremes.
- It is important to understand how different ancient Jewish culture is from ours and how guilty we are of reading modern meanings into Bible terms.
- There is room for Christian liberty in this area.
- The mark of Christian maturity is never seen in the New Testament as unbridled physical and emotional displays, but rather in self-control – Galatians 5:22-23; I Timothy 3:8; II Timothy 1:7; Titus 1:8, 2:2, 11-14, I Peter 5:8; II Peter 1:5-7,
- In this lesson, we will look at four types of physical expression that some would claim the Bible promotes.

Bowing

- The two primary words for *worship*, *shachah* (Strong's H7812) and *proskeneo* (Strong's G4352), contain the idea of bowing.
- Hebrew as a language is based on very concrete ideas (things that can be interacted with via our senses). At the root of abstract thoughts are concrete ideas.
 - Example: *qavah* (Strong's H6960) is translated as “wait” in Isaiah 40:31. The literal meaning of the word is “to bind together by twisting”. The abstract idea of waiting is thus compared to the concrete idea of twisting and braiding fibers into a rope.

Clapping Hands

- Clapping hands is a Biblical expression of joy, sometimes in a derisive sense against a fallen enemy.
- There are nine appearances of clapping hands in the Bible:

- II Kings 11:12 – the people clap when Joash is crowned.
- Job 27:23, 34:37; Lamentations 2:15, Ezekiel 25:6; Nahum 3:19 – clapping associated with victory or mocking an enemy.
- Psalm 98:8, Isaiah 55:12 – anthropomorphic rivers and trees clap in joy.
- Psalm 47:1 – joy at the reign of the Messiah.

Raising Hands

- The act of raising hands in the Bible can have many different meanings:
 - Prayer/Appeal – I Timothy 2:8; Psalm 28:2, 44:20, 141:2; I Kings 8:22
 - Oath/Affirmation – Nehemiah 8:6, Deuteronomy 32:40
 - Blessing – Psalm 63:4, 134:2; Luke 24:50
 - Lament – Lamentations 2:19, 3:41
- “The practice of ‘lifting hands in prayer’ in the Old Testament is always associated with lament.” – Calvin Pearson

Dancing

- Jewish folk dancing is a common expression of joy in the Old Testament – Exodus 15:20, Ecclesiastes 3:4, Psalm 30:11, Jeremiah 31:13.
- What about David dancing before the Ark in II Samuel 6:14-16 and I Chronicles 15:29?
 - This is a record of David’s actions and not a command.
 - It is consistent with Jewish culture where folk dancing is part of a celebration.
- What about Psalms 149 and 150?
 - The lesson of these two psalms is to praise God in every aspect of our lives.
 - The language is poetic and not dogmatic. If the commands to dance are enforceable, so are those to praise God by lying in bed (149:5) and carrying swords (149:6).