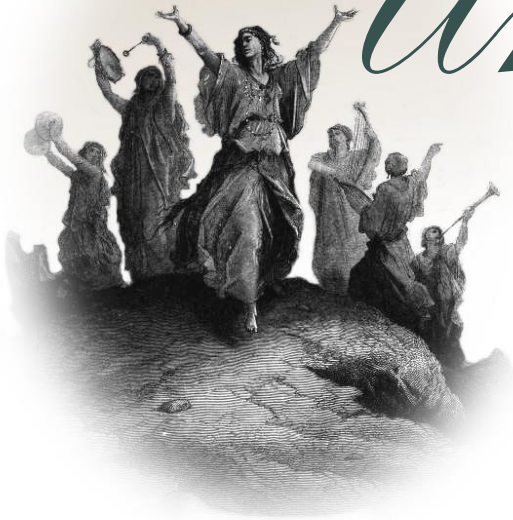


# In Unison



The trumpeters and  
singers joined in unison,  
as with one voice, to  
give praise and thanks  
to the Lord.  
2 Chronicles 5:13

## In Spirit and Truth

*The test of excellence in worship is motive. Performed for the wrong reason, it is something trivial and useless; performed for the correct reason, it is something beautiful, and pleasing to the Lord.*

How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints. O LORD, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant; you have freed me from my chains. I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.

Psalm 116:12-17

### Payback

How can we repay the Lord? There is no answer given in Psalm 116 because there *is* no answer. We cannot repay the Lord—nor should we try. He expects no payment for His grace, and any payment offered would be only an offense to Him, a bitter and acrid essence. The sweeter essence, welcomed happily by the Lord, is the ‘thank offering’: unsullied, child-like devotion; public declarations of allegiance; and honest, heartfelt service—all lovingly offered because He first loved us.

We need never feel guilty about striving for excellence in our service or worship so long as our motives are pure.

How do we establish the correct motive for excellent service and worship? Just as we take Spiritual inventory before partaking of the ordinance of Communion, we should take personal inventory of our motives before we consider serving our Lord. Every time we come to Him to serve—whether it be leading others as a choir member, worshiping on our own, or serving Him in any other way—we should ask ourselves:

- Do I even *want* to? Is it the desire of my heart to worship the Lord—

and to lead others in His worship—with the very best I have to offer?

- Is there anything I should confess to my Lord before I begin—anything that will hinder or prevent effective service?

- Am I willing to permit the Spirit to work through me?

- Is there any part of me that I’m holding back from God—anything that I *won’t* do for Him?

- Am I hoping to gain any earthly reward by my service of worship?

- Am I seeking to please anyone other than my Lord?

Excellence is not defined by quantity, but by *quality*. Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11) gave a great sum to the work of the Lord—much more than the widow’s ‘mites’ (Mark 12:41-44)—but God killed them for their deceit and hypocrisy, while Jesus praised the generosity of the widow.

Excellence is the goal of the humble, contrite heart—a heart seeking to please and honor a gracious God. It is not contrived, it is not borrowed from someone else, but it is the result of one person worshiping in Spirit and truth.

“Worship is giving God the best that He has given you. Be careful what you do with the best you have. Whenever you get a blessing from God, give it back to Him as a love-gift. Take time to meditate before God and offer the blessing back to Him in a deliberate act of worship. If you hoard it for yourself, it will turn into Spiritual dry rot, as the manna did when it was hoarded. God will never allow you to keep a Spiritual blessing completely for yourself. It must be given back to Him so that He can make it a blessing to others.”  
 (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*)



*Several years back, our drama group in San Diego, His Company, required the services of a sound man who was not a member of the troupe and had never worked with us before.*

At our first meeting, while I was explaining the production to him and those things that would be required of him, the sound man stopped me with his condition for this ‘service’: he would be happy to work with us—so long as he got a line of credit in the printed program. As it was a small thing (and I had planned on doing it anyway), I heartily agreed.

From that point on I always felt a little sadness for the sound man. His work for us was exemplary; he was always on time for rehearsals and on cue

with the mics. But I knew that in his heart the motives were wrong. And he had foolishly exchanged the eternal reward of the Father for the fleeting glory of man.

### The Hard Question

Let’s get right down to it. Let’s stand in front of the mirror and ask ourselves—with a hard, unflinching stare in the mirror, let’s ask ourselves the very important question: *Are we going to live what we say, or just say the words?*

When we stand in our neat, pew-aligned rows on Sunday morning and sing the words up to God, do we really mean them—or are we just killing time until the pot roast?

- “To God Be the glory”
- “Glory Be To the Father”
- “O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee (in lowly paths of service free)”
- “I Will Serve Thee Because I Love Thee”
- “I’ll Go Where You Want Me To Go”
- “Now I Belong to Jesus”

Do you mean it when you sing those words? Are you living for God’s glory or your own? When you bow your head in your private prayer closet and speak your innermost thoughts to the Father, do you really mean what you say? Is it honesty, or simply well-rehearsed platitudes?

- “Your will be done...”
- “Everything I have is Yours...”
- “...and I’ll give You all the glory”
- “...and for Jesus’ sake...”
- “Amen.”

When you speak such phrases, do you actually see the words as separate, purposely selected thoughts that put voice to your heart—or do they slip out from between your lips without any conscious effort whatsoever?

I challenge all of us to dare to be *different*—different from the majority of those claiming to be part of the Kingdom. I challenge all of us to mean what we say and to accept our true position in Christ: Bought and paid for.

- 
- We were not created out of biology alone, but by the science of a God who knitted us together in our mother’s womb.
  - We have not invented our abilities, but are nurtured by a quickening, comforting Spirit who uses us for the Father’s glory.
  - We do not own ourselves, but are owned by the One who gave His life that we might serve the Kingdom and its King.

## Scripture

Let the assembled peoples gather around you.  
Rule over them from on high;  
let the Lord judge the peoples.  
Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness,  
according to my integrity, O Most High.  
Psalm 7:7-8

A psalm of David.  
Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary?  
Who may live on your holy hill?  
He whose walk is blameless  
and who does what is righteous,  
who speaks the truth from his heart  
and has no slander on his tongue,  
who does his neighbor no wrong  
and casts no slur on his fellowman,  
who despises a vile man  
but honors those who fear the Lord,  
who keeps his oath  
even when it hurts,  
who lends his money without usury  
and does not accept a bribe against  
the innocent.  
He who does these things  
will never be shaken.  
Psalm 15:1-5

Who may ascend the hill of the Lord?  
Who may stand in his holy place?  
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,

who does not lift up his soul to an idol  
or swear by what is false.  
He will receive blessing from the Lord  
and vindication from God his Savior.  
Psalm 24:3-5

From heaven the Lord looks down  
and sees all mankind;  
from his dwelling place he watches  
all who live on earth—  
he who forms the hearts of all,  
who considers everything they do.  
No king is saved by the size of his army;  
no warrior escapes by his great strength.  
A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;  
despite all its great strength it cannot save.  
But the eyes of the Lord are on those  
who fear him,  
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,  
to deliver them from death  
and keep them alive in famine.  
Psalm 33:13-19

He has showed you, O man, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.  
Micah 6:8

Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. 2 Corinthians 4:2

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. Philippians 4:8



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Take Time to be Holy (Longstaff)

Take time to be holy,  
Be calm in thy soul;  
Each thought and each motive  
Beneath His control;  
Thus led by His Spirit  
To fountains of love,  
Thou soon shall be fitted  
For service above.

Lord Jesus, Think on Me (Synesius)

Lord Jesus, think on me,  
And purge away my sin;  
From earth-born passions set me free,  
And make me pure within.

Praise the Savior (Kelly)

Praise the Savior, ye who know Him!  
Who can tell how much we owe Him?  
Gladly let us render to Him  
All we are and have.

# In Unison

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