

**Thursday, July 23, 2020**

**SERIES: CHARACTER OVER COMPROMISE**

**SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD**

**TITLE: Worship Without Reservation Pt. 2**

Yesterday, we began to look at Psalm 100, and we saw that if we are going to be people who choose character over compromise, we need to worship God without reservation. We learned that we need to **make a joyful noise to the Lord**. In other words, we need to be willing to express our love and gratitude to him. We also learned that we are called to **serve the Lord with gladness**. And that's where we are picking it up today.

If we're going to serve the Lord with gladness, we should lean into our *SHAPE*. What does that mean? Well, God gave us *spiritual gifts*. That's what the S stands for. He also gave us a *heart* for certain people or things. That's the H. It stands for our heart. We also have *abilities*. That's the A. Some of these abilities were gifts, and others were developed. And that brings us to P. P stands for our *personality*. Now I don't have time to go into all the different personalities – whether you're a driver, or an expressive, or an extrovert, or introvert. But the reality is, God has given us personalities. We were knit in our mothers' wombs. We were created intentionally by God in a certain way. Those personalities are not right or wrong. They just are. The only thing I would say about this is, do not forget your personality does not dictate your behavior. We all have a choice in how we behave. Personality is fixed, but behavior is a choice. So never use your personality as an excuse for poor behavior.

And last is our *experience*. That's what the E stands for. We have all gone through life hurt and blessed. Some of us had more good experiences than bad, and some of us more bad experiences than good. The reality is, whatever we've gone through, we can use those experiences to serve people, whether it's through counseling at the church or coaching others. This can involve marriage and family, budgeting, addiction, recovery, accomplishing goals in life, overcoming grief because of death. We all have experiences, and God has allowed us to have those, so that we can minister to other people. 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (ESV) confirms this. Paul writes, [“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, <sup>4</sup> who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.”](#)

You see, the events of your life are not meaningless! There is great purpose in them. One of the purposes is to comfort, encourage, and coach others, who are going through the same thing. We are called to worship God through service. So lean into your SHAPE.

But we don't want to move on just yet, because we cannot miss what the psalmist says about service. The psalmist says we are to *serve with gladness*. Have you ever been to a restaurant, and the waiter clearly hated what he was doing, and who he was doing it with? You can have the greatest meal on Earth, but when the service stinks, the whole experience is a letdown. The same is true for our service to God. If we are going to serve God, that will be an act of praise, but only when we do it with a joyful heart; When it is the outflow of our love for God – not out of obligation.

A couple years ago, my wife and I were packing to head down to Mexico for a church event. Well, in preparing for our trip, my wife noticed her passport was missing. This was a problem because we were going to head to Mexico 4 days later. I had much to do in those final days. Tiffany had much to do before we were to leave. However, I knew who to call: my mother. My mother is a servant who serves with gladness. I called her and asked her for her help. She said, “No problem. I’ll be right over.” She spent a few hours looking everywhere. After an exhaustive search, she left without finding it. I told her, “Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.” She said, “I love to help any way I can.” She served the Lord with gladness that day and often does. It always comes down to her attitude and her heart. And I know you're wondering, did we find the passport? No, we didn't. However, by God's grace, we were able to get a new one in San Diego the day before we left for Mexico. But the point of this is: If we're going to serve others, whether in the church or out, we have to do it with gladness. Our motive really does matter to God. And it matters to each other. So let's **serve the Lord with gladness**. That's Essential #2: is to serve the Lord with gladness.

Essential #3 is also in Psalm 100, verse 2. He tells us to **Come into his presence with singing**. Some of you are terrified at this point. Some of you, may be thinking to yourself: I can't carry a tune. I sound like a cat dying a slow and painful death. Well, to us, that may be true. It's true. It's bad. But did you know God has built-in auto-tune? God takes whatever your song is and filters it, so it sounds sweet. He wants you to come before him singing whatever song of praise is on your heart. It doesn't have to be a hymn or our favorite worship song. Sing whatever the Spirit is putting on your heart. Just do it with joy. Enter into His presence with a song of love, of joy, of respect, humility, and gratitude, and it will be a sweet, sweet song in his ear...despite what it sounds like to us.

So let's review: Essential 1 is “Make a joyful noise. Essential 2 is “serve the Lord with gladness”. Essential 3 is “come into his presence with singing”. Now listen to what the psalmist says in verse 3:

**<sup>3</sup> Know that the LORD, he is God!**

**It is he who made us, and we are his;  
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.**

Here, the psalmist goes from how to worship, to why we worship. He writes, “*know that the LORD, he is God.*” Essential #4 is **Know that the LORD is God**. He's not a false god. He's not one of many gods out there. He's not a trinket, statue, or bobblehead. He is the one true God: The one and only God, forever and always.

This knowing is, in part, rational or educational. It's knowing *about* God. We know about God by studying Scripture, or getting into God's Word. You can do this also by listening to programs like this one, here at Back to the Bible. (Or by reading one of our online devotionals or studies at [BacktotheBible.org](http://BacktotheBible.org).) Or watching any of our great YouTube videos out there. Or maybe it's reading another book or devotional, by one of your favorite Christian authors. If you're an over-achiever, you'll read a systematic theology book. It's also going into Creation, and seeing His majestic world, admiring the rivers, the prairie, the mountains, the stars, etc. It's pausing and looking at a baby, and being in awe of the miracle of life.

But then it is so much more than the head knowledge of God. It is also *experiencing* God. **Psalm 34:8 puts it this way: "Taste and see that the Lord is good."** It's the relational element of knowing God. It's not enough to simply recognize who God is, one must know God one on one.

### **DISCUSSION:**

N: Now let's turn to Arnie Cole, CEO of Back to the Bible. Arnie, you have always maintained that it's not a religion. It's a relationship. When did you first realize that?

A: You know, probably when I became a Christ follower at 47. I mean, being raised in a very good Christian home, but I was very conservative - back then, I would've called it legalism. The Bible was the book of "No", not the book of "Yes". It was always, felt so, about a religion, about being a Christian, doing the "right thing", what looked right. I mean, it was all about appearances. It was just all of that stuff. I mean, you keep going down that road, and pretty soon, it's all about rules and regulations. That's pretty boring, and that's not really what it's all about. And you miss a relationship with Jesus Christ. So it was - it took a long time for me to get out of that. And that's why, when I turned my back on it all, it was totally because it was about religion, not a relationship.

N: And there is a significant difference in the two. And I think a lot of people, if they're honest, still struggle with it. I think I still struggle with it too: to go from the head to the heart; to move from knowing about God, to really knowing Him, and walking with Him in intimacy. But one of the best ways I think that we can, I think reflect on this practically, is in often our human relationships: how we love our children, our grandchildren. We may give them boundaries. We may give them rules and things, set up a playground for them to play in. It's not because we don't love them; It's because we love them, we do so. But they also know, no matter what they do, that doesn't change our love for them and our care for them. And the same is true for God. We just seem to probably struggle with it more, because, well, He is transcendent, and He is God, and we're finite. So I think that's always going to be a struggle for us as humans. So beyond the head knowledge about God, what are some ways that you actually experience God?

A: Yeah. You know, heart knowledge, or heart stuff, always is that emotional experience. And we've studied a lot of that. And whereas head content, oftentimes, I've been pretty skeptical, because yes, you need a certain level of head content. But to me, somebody, who is a mature believer, needs to move beyond the classroom, and actually get back into the trenches, and start winning people to Jesus. And that's been a big thing of mine. But there is - you can get power -

from head knowledge too. I was talking to an anthropologist, a Harvard guy, and we had this argument, because I was saying, “You know, the heart stuff is really what gets me on fire for Jesus”. He said, “Oh no, Arnie, the head stuff: I go and I look,” and you know, he was doing all this filming in Israel, in the Holy Land. He goes, “I get so fired up with all of this stuff.” And it's like, “Man, that's head knowledge. How can you get excited over that?” So, you know, some people are different. I think at the end of the day though, you need to look at yourself and, what is the outcome? You know, what lights your fire and what gets you out there, sharing your faith?

N: Yep. It's both the intake, but also the outtake. And I think that's really an important piece. If you're accumulating knowledge, or if you're experiencing and having these emotions, but it doesn't move you to do anything, that's basically a useless faith. So take whatever you have: that knowledge, that heart, put them together - as Arnie's saying - and go out and do something with it.

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In order to really know God, one needs to enter into a relationship with God. This happens when we meet Jesus Christ – God incarnate – and make Him our personal Savior. Many of you listening today know what this means and have done so. Praise the Lord. But for some of you, this may be new. Some of you go to church from time to time, or watch a service online, but don't really know God, or know about Jesus. Let me briefly get you caught up to speed:

A little over 2000 years ago, God became flesh in the form of a child. This is why we celebrate Christmas. Jesus, who was and is God, lived a perfect life. But His message of love and salvation was rejected, so He was punished and killed on a cross. That death on the cross wasn't meaningless. In fact, it was of utmost importance. He died to pay the price for your sin and my sin. But then, in a move only capable by God, God raised Jesus from the dead. And Jesus said, **“Because I live, so you also will live.” (John 14:19)** He also said, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father, but through me.” (John 14:6).**

In other words, to experience God, you must know Him, and the only way to really know Him, is through Jesus. But to experience this worship without reservation, we must really know Him.

Then, the psalmist reminds us, that God is the Creator and the giver of life. It wasn't by the unguided process of time, plus matter, plus chance. No. God created the world, the universe and all its inhabitants. We are His. The follower of Christ becomes a sheep of His pasture. He is in charge of our lives. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. John 10:27-28 says, **“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28</sup> I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one can snatch them away from me...”**

Verse three is a recognition and a love of God, without reservation. Each day I return home from work, I open the front door, and I hear my youngest scream, “Daddy! Daddy's home! Daddy, Daddy! He runs up to me and hugs me. Then I hear my middle son come tearing up the stairs screaming, “Dad!” And he practically tackles me. They love me. They acknowledge who I am. This must be a hint to what it's like, when we recognize God in worship and reverence.

When we know God, we will really know Him, not just know of Him. It's not like knowing about your favorite football coach, or your favorite author, or maybe even your favorite Bible teacher. Because we may know of those people; we may really value those people; they may have had an intimate impact on our lives. However, if we aren't in relationship with them, then we really don't know them. The same is true for God. *Let's taste and see.* Let's walk intimately with Him, through His Word, through prayer, through service, and opening up our lives to Him, so that we might really know Him.

So we are to shout with joy, worship the Lord, and sing to Him. Why? Because He is God, and we are His. And we can know Him personally. Verse 4 provides the last essential of worship.

**Enter his gates with thanksgiving,  
And his courts with praise!  
Give thanks to him; bless his name!**

We don't go into a temple, as the psalmist would have when writing this, but we do gather together corporately at church. Or at least we did, and we will again. We also have direct access to God through prayer. So when we come before God, we are to **Enter his presence with thanksgiving**. That's Essential #5. Notice the psalmist says to give thanks twice in this verse. This means we are to take this seriously and do it! When we praise God, we knock at the door of God, and prepare to enter into His presence to worship. We should thank God for every blessing – big, small, old, new. Why? Because it's all grace. In other words, we don't deserve it. We need to recognize the real giver of it: the clothes you wear, the food you eat, the church you are in, the air we breathe. It is all grace. We should give praise where praise is due.

Some of you may be in the midst of a painful experience. It could be a physical illness. It could be a broken relationship. It could be a deep recession of your finances. It could be just the burden and the loneliness of COVID-19. Those experiences are real. I am sorry if you are hurting. You are not alone. But I can promise you, even in the trials, you can and will experience God's grace, if you look.

This is true, and it's because of what we see in verse 5:

**For the LORD is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever,  
And his faithfulness to all generations.**

God is good. In all circumstances, He is good. Worshipping without reservation recognizes this. Our beliefs are tied to truth, and not dependent upon our feelings. There are times when we don't see or feel this goodness, but I promise it's not because God has changed. We have changed. We need to see and experience Him rightly. This is through the study of the Bible. By carefully looking at our experiences with God, we will see His faithfulness. We must want to see His never-ending love. His love has no end. His love will never fail. His love is perfect. We see that from the beginning of time to the pinnacle of His love. This is captured in John 3:16, which says, **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”**

This is why we worship without reservation: Because God is good. His love is forever. And it is realized in Jesus and His payment for our sin. This act of love displays His faithfulness to those whom the psalmist originally addressed. But it is also for us today, and for the generations to come.

It is clear, every Christian can worship without reservation, by shouting for joy, serving with gladness, coming with singing, really knowing God, and thanking Him.

So this is my encouragement to you today: Do not wait for a Sunday service, but instead, worship our God and our King without reservation. Serve Him with gladness TODAY. Sing His praise, no matter what you sound like. Pursue God intimately, really knowing Him and not just knowing of Him. And of course, thank Him for every bit of grace, both big and small.

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N: Let's bring Arnie Cole into today's discussion. Arnie, I talked today about experiencing God's grace even in the midst of trials. What is that like?

A: You know, there's some trials that you come flying through, and you actually become stronger and you see God every step of the way. And then there's other trials, where it's like, "Oh man, I totally blew it once again." And you wonder, "Where's God?" and all of this stuff. And the whole idea behind trials, is that you stay focused on Jesus today. You can't look back and say, "Oh man, I blew it again yesterday", because, okay, God already forgave you. You may need to really work on the people around you to forgive you, or forgiving yourself, but you've got today, and today's the day that helps you move closer to Jesus. And the one thing that'll hold you back, is living in the past, and not forgiving yourself.

N: God's grace truly is sufficient, even in the biggest of trials. And I think you're right. I think there are seasons of trials where you just can't see it, but focusing on God, focusing on Jesus Christ, will help you in that process. Well, let's talk about motives, okay? Because motives matter to God; the heart really does matter to our King. So knowing that, what do we need to do to worship Him without reservation?

A: That's a great one. And that's something for me, as a late in life conversion, when I started back to church, all this, and it was like - the whole Christian community went crazy. They brought drums in, they had electric guitars. I'd never seen anything like it - I mean, I'd seen electric guitars at rock concerts, but not in church. And then these people had the audacity to - not only when they were standing and singing - they would hold their arms up high, and like kind of dance around, or, you know, praising God in their worship. So yes, as you point out in your talk, worship is something to be enthusiastic about, to be empowered about, but we each do it a little bit separately, I think. You know, some of us, some things really get us going, other groups... ..but it's all for the honor and glory of God.

N: Well, and I think as you progress in your faith, it's like any other relationship; you can almost become complacent with it. You know, I mean, being married long enough, it's really

easy to coast. Get into any relationship, and it's really easy to coast, and the same is true for our worship. It seems like, when people first come to saving faith, they come to a worship service, and they're a little more charismatic at times in their worship. But then over time, they start to quiet down, stand a little bit more, and maybe are less expressive. I'm not saying one's right, or one's wrong, because it does come back to the heart. But we need to always go back and say, "Okay, do I really believe this? And if so, am I showing God that I really do love him, and I really do care about what He is doing in my life?"

A: Well, you know Nat, I have a cool observation. As a new believer, I worked for YWAM\*, youth without any money, [\*Youth With a Mission]. And I was in the Middle East, and we were training missionaries to look like businessmen. And so we were in some terribly dangerous places, but when we would get together for worship, those people sang to their hearts - I mean, it was like they lifted their - and me too, you know, Mr. Conservative. And I think, some of that, it shows your attitude about where you are with Jesus, and if you're on fire, if you're out there. And that's why I've always prayed, "Lord, keep me on the front line, so that I don't get burned out". Because when you burn out, you sing terribly, you know, it's like, you're just half dead. Nobody wants to follow you. It's just, you've got to breathe the fire.

N: Yep. Well, when Jesus really is the best thing in your life, it's hard not to celebrate, and to really let loose. And I think that's part of the issue we have in the U S today, is: we've got a lot of comfort and a lot of distraction, and it's really easy to celebrate Netflix, and Amazon Prime, and all the cool games we have on our phones, a lot more than we celebrate Jesus. Because at times, it's a lot more entertaining, but in places that you've been to, and I've been to, around the world, they don't have that. All they've got is Jesus. And when they gather, they are celebrating, because He changes everything. And I think we need to reclaim that today. [That's so true].

Well, let's close out our time talking about COVID-19, because the COVID crisis of 2020 is forcing us to worship from home. And that's really different for a lot of us, even us pastors. Have you seen any research, or heard if that's brought a new perspective to Christians about worship?

A: I think it's too early to say a new perspective. You do see trending: what I see more of, I guess - a trend starting is - I don't know the right word - consumerism - or a churchy term, is Pew-sitters. And that is, I attend my church online. So I'm consuming that - not so much participating - I'm consuming it. But then I try another church, and I consume that. And what happens is, you're a Pew-sitter. Instead of being more involved and more motivated, you become more passive, and it becomes more commonplace. And if the kids want to play, or they want to look at their device, or maybe you're checking your phone, and it just becomes routine, which is not so hot, as you well know.

N: Right. Yeah. I think that's been a trend for a while, even in the churches. And now with the current environment, it's only going to increase, perpetuate, and the churches have got their jobs cut out for them. We do here at Back to the Bible as well, but we're confident that God's faithfulness hasn't changed, and the power of His Word definitely has not lost its sting. And so it's our prayer for you listening out there, that you will be engaged in your church, in whatever

form that looks like today. Do not be complacent, but instead be involved, be engaged, and be on fire, and move closer to Jesus today than you were yesterday.