

# Come let us adore him

## 2. Fall on your knees

December 9-10, 2017

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Text: 2 Chronicles 7

*[Note to website visitors:] The video of this message may differ in some details from this manuscript.*

Welcome to second week of our message series about worship. If you have a Bible, please turn with me to **2 Chronicles 7**, which is in the Old Testament. If you don't have a Bible or a Bible app, feel free to pick up a Bible in the back on your way out.

Lead worship long enough and something will come out wrong, guaranteed. There have been plenty of times I have come home from worship and kicked myself for saying something from the platform that I wish I hadn't. So I could relate when I read about a group of worship leaders who were sharing some of their most embarrassing moments leading worship. I laughed because I've been there. Here are a few of their bloopers.

*\* I once asked a congregation to "Stand and worship us," rather than "Stand and worship **with** us."*

*\* I picked soft music for a congregational prayer time that I later found out was the theme to "The Exorcist."*

*\* I mixed up the lyrics to the song, "Word of God Speak" and said to God, "the last thing I need is to be with You."*

Sometimes words just come out wrong. In reality, I know that worship leader wanted say that being with God is the whole point of worship. Last week, I said that at its core, **Worship = meeting with God**. Worship is an encounter between God and his people. That means that when we worship, we are in the presence of God. And in God's presence, we thrive and find all we need.

Bob Kauflin writes that in the Bible, we see that God chooses certain times and places to reveal himself. And one of those times is when the church gathers. I often listen to sermon podcasts and watch services online. But they don't replace gathering with other believers. Something happens when we gather with other believers that doesn't happen when we are by ourselves. That is, a fuller experience of God's presence. Jesus promised in **Matthew 18:20 For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.** Jesus is always with us, but He promised to be present in a special way when we gather with others. He doesn't reveal his presence equally every time, but he is present. We can't command God to reveal his presence to us, but **through worship, we can welcome God's presence.**

When we worship, God will be present. We can welcome God's presence, or we can ignore or resist it. When someone comes to my house, I

can choose to welcome them or not. I'll admit that when the doorbell rings, I greet a friend a lot more warmly than I do a sales rep from a cable company. I'm never rude to the salesperson. But I'm sure that they can tell I'm not greeting them like a friend. God can tell how welcome he is when he shows up at our services, too. And he will reveal his presence a lot more to those who welcome him than to those who resist him.

**2 Chronicles 7** describes how God's presence came in a mighty way at the dedication of the first temple. It tells us how the Jewish people welcomed the presence of God. King Solomon built Israel's first temple around 1000 B.C. Before that, Israel worshiped in the tabernacle, which was a moveable tent. While the Jews were 40 years in the desert on their way to the Promised Land, they would set up the tent, then take it down to move to the next place. After they were living in Palestine permanently, King Solomon decided to build a permanent temple. **2 Chronicles 3:1** says they built it on the highest spot in Jerusalem -- Mt. Moriah. That was the spot where the Lord appeared to Solomon's father, King David. They were seeking the presence of God. The temple was more than a building where people held worship services. It became where God's presence was centered. People gathered in the outer courts to pray and sacrifice. But in the very center of the temple was the Holy of Holies. That was where God's presence dwelt. No one but the high priest could enter there, and even he could enter just once per year. Today there is no one specific spot where God's presence dwells. We don't have to fly to Jerusalem to be in God's presence. He will come to us when desire him, seek him, and welcome him.

Let's look at what Solomon and the people did to welcome God's presence. **To welcome God's presence:**

**Prepare for worship (v. 1-2.)** Building the temple was all about preparing to meet God. It cost a lot of money, time, and effort to construct. The point was to build a place to meet God in worship. Finally, the building was complete, and it was worth all the effort because the presence of God showed up in an overwhelming way. **<sup>1</sup>When Solomon finished praying, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. <sup>2</sup>The priests could not enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it.** Can you imagine? The presence of God was so overwhelming that they couldn't go in the building. I have heard people talk about being overcome by the presence of God so powerfully that they couldn't move or even stand up. Solomon and the people were not surprised, though. They were preparing for this. The main way we can prepare to welcome God's presence is to pray. The chapter before this, Chapter 6, was mostly one long prayer by Solomon. He was asking God to come. So, before you leave the house, or in the car on the way here, pray for God to reveal himself to you in worship.

I am grateful for the way we experience at Crossroads. But I believe God wants more. If you are hungry for God, for a greater experience of God's presence here at our church, I invite you to pray with us for an outpouring of his Spirit. We want to mobilize to pray for revival here. And if you are open to being

part of the team that prays for that, just indicate that on the Communicator Card. We'll have an organizational meeting soon that will work out how and when we do that.

**Adopt a worship posture (v. 3).** <sup>3</sup> *When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, they knelt on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and they worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying, "He is good; his love endures forever."*

Our body posture sends a message to others and to ourselves. For example, if you ring someone's doorbell and they answer with clenched fists, that sends a signal. You know they are not preparing to shake your hand, so you might feel defensive. And the person clenching their fists is going to feel tense. Speakers have been told to adopt a "power pose" before they go out to speak. That means to stand like Wonder Woman with your feet spread apart, fists on hips. It's supposed to release hormones that make us feel more confident. I don't know if a "power pose" is a real thing. But I do know that "presence poses" help us worship and experience God.

Let's pray. Many of us just bowed our heads. You might have even folded your hands. Why? Jesus didn't command us to do that. We do it maybe because we were taught. But most likely it helps us focus our attention on God. Our posture helps us adopt an attitude of prayer.

Here are a few other postures to take in worship. Let's practice those. Please stand. We stand to sing, because standing is a way we honor God. When I officiate at a wedding, I'm always moved when the bride enters the room, and everyone stands to honor her. We stand to sing because we are communicating respect to him. Okay, you may be seated. Now raise your hands. Keep them up. Great. You are now praising God just like the Psalmists.

*Psalm 63:4 says I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. Psalm 134:2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the LORD.* If you wonder why people raise their hands when they sing and worship, it is to praise and honor God. It helps welcome God's presence. Now, open your hands, palms up, in front of you. This is a posture of receiving, which tells the rest of our being that we are open to God. We can also bow our heads or kneel before God. When I meet God early in the morning in private worship, I start on my knees before God and sometimes flat on my stomach before God. This helps me welcome the presence of God in my life.

Present an offering (v. 4-5.) Most people expect that there will be an offering taken at a worship service. It's been said that where two or three Christians are gathered, someone will take up an offering. It might surprise some people to think that we can experience the presence of God during an

offering, but we can. Most of us are going to be giving gifts to people we love this month. When we give that gift, it means something. When you've gotten your sister or your friend something special, you don't just toss it to them while it's in the bag and walk away. No, that moment of giving is an *occasion*. Giving to God is an occasion, too. In fact, bringing an offering was the central act in worship during Old Testament times. There was no such thing as worship without bringing an offering to sacrifice. Sometimes people brought an animal, sometimes a bird, or grain, or wine. What you brought depended on whether you were coming to God for forgiveness of sins or to give thanks or something else. Bringing offerings was the high point of the dedication of the temple. **2 Chronicles 7:4** says *<sup>4</sup> Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD. <sup>5</sup> And King Solomon offered a sacrifice of 22,000 head of cattle and 120,000 sheep and goats. So the king and all the people dedicated the temple of God.* This was a huge worship celebration, so there was a huge offering sacrificed. Thousands of cattle, sheep, and goats. Those animals were the most valuable to people in that day. Now, I didn't see any cows in the parking lot today. Obviously, we don't bring livestock offerings. Instead, we offer money, because that represents our lives. Every day we trade our time and our abilities for a salary. So when we give money back to God, we are giving our lives to him. And our offerings are different because they serve a different purpose. We don't offer anything to be forgiven of our sins because Jesus already made the final and perfect offering of himself on the cross. Today when we bring an offering, it's an expression of love and trust in God. We give in order to extend the Kingdom and to obey the biblical commands to give. We acknowledge that without God, we'd have nothing. We declare that we trust him for our future. And giving to God spurs love for God. Jesus says in **Matthew 6:21** *For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.* When we give we say, "Jesus, you're first in my heart," so that is an act of worship.

The way we give is changing these days, too. Linda and I give to Crossroads online. We like that because we don't write checks very often anymore. And when we're gone, we're still giving here, even if we're worshiping at another church. If you want to give online, just go to our website. You can even text to give if you like. The biggest adjustment Linda had to make was not having something to put in the offering basket during the offering. But we can sing praise to God anywhere, so we can also give to him from our computer, too. Then during the offering at the service, say "God, I ask you to bless and use my offering that I have already given to you." God still receives our love that way.

Sing to God (v.6.) We can welcome God's presence by singing praise. Music was important back in Solomon's day, too. **2 Chronicles 7:6** says that at the dedication of the temple: *<sup>6</sup> The priests took their positions, as did the*

Levites with the LORD's musical instruments, which King David had made for praising the LORD and which were used when he gave thanks, saying, "His love endures forever." Opposite the Levites, the priests blew their trumpets, and all the Israelites were standing.

Solomon's father, King David, wrote a lot of the *Psalms* we have in our Bible. The Psalms are actually song lyrics. And they have been sung by God's people for 3,000 years. Music and song are important parts of our worship here at Crossroads. Isn't our worship team fantastic? We are really blessed to have terrific music at our church. In fact, we have several teams of talented musicians here. And they are all volunteers except for Kevin, who is our worship director. And he's not even on the platform most weeks because his job is to equip others. If you would like to be part of the team as a singer or play in the band, please put that on the Communicator Card, and Kevin will be in touch. The singing in our services is not just warmup for the message. It's a vital way we welcome God's presence. When we sing, we engage our bodies in a way that affects us and honors God. One saint of the past said, "He who sings prays twice." That means when we sing, we're connecting with God with our spirit, soul, and body. Every great spiritual awakening produces new worship music.

The Methodist Revival in the 1700s produced thousands of new hymns. And Methodists were known for their singing. John Wesley was the founder of the Methodist Church. He published a hymn book that included some instructions for singing in worship. I thought you might like to hear them. I've updated the language for some of them:

1. *Learn these songs before you learn any others.* (That's because it's easier to worship with songs we know.)
2. *Make sure to gather with the congregation as frequently as you can. Do not let a little tiredness get in your way. If you don't feel like going, go anyway, and you will be blessed.*
3. *Sing boldly. Beware of singing as if you were half-dead or half-asleep. Don't be afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan.*
4. *Sing modestly. Do not sing so loudly that you stick out from everyone else.*
5. *Keep to the beat of the song. Follow the worship leader.*
6. *Above all, sing spiritually. Sing every word to God. Aim at pleasing him more than yourself or anyone else.*

Those are pretty good guidelines for us today, too!

Pray (v. 12.) In **v. 12**, God told Solomon **"I have heard your prayer."** Worship services include prayer time. They can help us experience God. I can still remember a service ten years ago when I received prayer. There were a few thousand people at this service, and the pastor invited anyone

who wanted prayer to come forward. I was in a balcony, so it wasn't convenient for me to go forward. But I felt prompted, so I made my way down to the main floor and had to weave among hundreds of other people until I saw a guy praying for someone else. I waited my turn, and when he turned around and saw me, he started to pray powerfully for me. I can still remember how God met me in that prayer, and it has impacted me to this day. I'm really glad I didn't settle for just listening to the message that day.

It's my privilege to pray for people after our services. I stand right there by the cross after each service to pray for whoever asks. And we also have prayer partners who pray for people. In fact, after this message, I'm going to invite anyone who would like prayer to come forward, and I and some other pastors will pray for you. We believe God will hear and answer and that you will receive God's love.

This Old Testament passage doesn't mention all the parts of our worship service today. For example, we don't see any reference to preaching or to Communion. Those are ways New Testament worship is different than Old Testament worship. When we worship in a way that welcomes the presence of God, it refreshes and empowers us for the days ahead.

The presence of God refuels us. <sup>10</sup> On the twenty-third day of the seventh month, he sent the people to their homes, joyful and glad in heart for the good things the LORD had done for David and Solomon and for his people Israel.