

I grew up in a church that believed. “A dancing foot and a praying knee don’t belong on the same leg.” What a joke. Satan didn’t invent dancing, God did! We are wired to express ourselves physically. We laugh when we are happy, cry when we are overwhelmed, jump up and down when we are excited and raise our hands in the air when we win. Why then don’t we do these things in our relationship with the Lord where we have the greatest reason to be happy, overwhelmed, excited and victorious?

In Luke 7: 31-32, Jesus makes a remarkable statement: To what then shall I liken the men of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, saying: “We played the flute for you. And you did not dance. We mourned to you, And you did not weep.” In other words, the Jews of Jesus’ day missed what was going on. When Jesus was born, they should have danced for joy that their Messiah had finally come, but they didn’t. When Jesus died, they should have wept, but they didn’t.

The Jews of Jesus’ day, most of them at least, missed the time of the Lord’s visitation among them. The time of our visitation is now, as long as we are alive in Christ. He is visiting us, and to what will he liken the men of our generation? Are we going to miss it too? This is our chance, our time to praise God on this earth. What are we going to do with the visitation we are being given today? Will we be a church that worships fully, or will we let tradition hold us back?

I understand that there are some gathering out there where people are expressive, but there is no true worship going on. Have you ever seen or experienced something like that? You go into a church and people are excited, shouting, dancing and running around, but you can just tell that it is a show, not worship. If an experience like that has turned you off of expressive worship, let me explain something to you: there is valid expressive worship and there is invalid expressive worship. What I challenge you with here is valid expressive worship.

What validates extravagant expressions of worship? I’ll tell you: the presence of God. If you go to church and God’s not there in the midst of extravagant expressions of worship, it’s just a show. But if you go to church and some people are doing something you’ve never seen before like raising their hands or bowing down, and if the presence of God is in that place, those expressions are validated.

Debbie and I have some friends from New Zealand and the wife loves, absolutely loves, the Queen of England. I’m not sure why, but she just loves her. The first time our friend got to see the Queen was at a parade. When she and her husband arrived, the streets were already lined with people. Our friend is very short, so she started searching for a place she could stand or climb to actually see the Queen pass by.

Everywhere seemed to be taken. They walked for blocks looking until finally they found a spot where no one had climbed—a trash dumpster. It didn’t matter to her what it was, she

climbed up on top. In a few moments, the Queen's processional went by. As soon as she saw the Queen, she started jumping up and down, waving her arms, clapping and yelling. "Hey! Hey!" The whole crowd was in an uproar at the sight of the Queen.

Now if the Queen were not passing by in that moment, if a crowd of people were not gathered to honor her, my friend would have looked absolutely crazy standing on a dumpster, jumping up and down, clapping, waving her arms and yelling. She would have to be nuts. What validated her extravagant expressions of praise? The presence of the Queen. As our friend went all out to show her admiration to the Queen in a huge crowd of people, no one even noticed her because they were all enthralled with the Queen's presence.

When you gather with other believers to worship, the King passes by. How do you respond to His presence? Do you sit around gawking at everyone else worshipping, or do you join in, expressing your love, admiration and gratitude to Him as well? If you don't join in, you will miss Him. Don't miss the King passing by! Engage Him with your heart and express it extravagantly.

Before I leave this point, I want to speak to the few people who do not need any more encouragement to express their worship. Most of us could express our worship more, but because some of you out there are already loving the Lord lavishly, I don't want to push you too far. What I have said so far is not my challenge to you to go all out. It is not instruction to run around the sanctuary.

I know none of you want to be distracting in worship. I don't either. If you are already worshipping God expressively, holding nothing from your heart back, then before you go to the next level, consider what might be distracting to those around you. If everyone is lifting their hands in worship, it would not be distracting to join them. Do you see the difference? Express your worship honestly and openly, but don't hinder others with distractions.