

## The Highest Form Of Praise

Many times I have stood in a gathering, enduring what had been labeled “praise” as technically sound but spiritually empty music was submitted to God. I have often raise my hands and lifted my voice in song because it seemed like the spiritual thing to do, only to sit down when it was all over with the same cold heart as I had on the drive to the service. Often I have grieved at my personal, fruitless efforts, to conjure up some kind of presentation to God that I knew would please Him, only to be as disappointed with my efforts as I felt He was in receiving them. I know in my heart that any effort on our part to give Him glory is fully accepted by Him. I know that you and I live under an immense amount of grace in everything we do, even those things that we do in the flesh without the heart perfection He desires from us. I also know in my heart that what I have considered “praise” is my own attempt at expressing in words what is due Him because of what I have been taught, not what He considers praise.

Over the years I have had a continual petition for Him to show me what the highest form of praise is. I have done a study, informal as it was, of praise over the centuries, the music of today, and the directions the church has taken about praise, only to find myself in a place of knowing that there is more, while not knowing what the ultimate of praise was and how to get there. My conclusion was that praise comes in many forms, honest praise music being one of them. I had eventually settled for the conclusion that praise is a heart focus on God and an expression of delight of Him, to Him. It was to be done as often as I was moved to do it. It was that simple, and that underwhelming.

Then, one day while I was simply resting in His presence, pondering this and some other things, the Holy Spirit impressed upon my heart to reboot my thoughts, backing away from specifics and begin an overview approach to all that God has done for mankind and why He has done it. The thought of how to even begin to approach such of a request was incredibly overwhelming at first. Anyway, what part did the overall plan of God have to do with praise? Then it hit me. The highest form of praise I could give my God would be to submit unconditionally to His plans, especially to the completed work of the cross. Any true praise to Him could only come after I had a complete heart commitment to Him, delighting in all of His ways.

He showed me that the most honorable way I could praise Him is to dedicate my complete being to the power initiated by Jesus and the eternal effect that flowed to me from His work. The more I submitted to Him and the power of His resurrection, the more I praised Him. Praise was a continual delighting in the changing power of the cross, and submitting to it, not some isolated expression of word or in song. As I submit to His Word, I praise Him. As I repent of my sin when He shows it to me, I praise Him. As I listen to His counsel before I move on anything in my life, I praise Him. As I decide to spend time with Him rather than attempt to solve whatever I am facing in my own limited or non-existent wisdom, I am flowing in the highest kind of life, one that He has determined for all of His children. I am living in the highest form of praise to Him because I am giving due honor to what He has done by joyfully submitting to it. He likes that!