

Message 2: The Benefits of Worship

SUGGESTED PASSAGE: PSALM 16:11

“You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”

MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message is to help us understand the many wonderful benefits that come from worship and from spending time in God’s presence. While we do not desire God’s presence so that we might gain the benefits, they are the result of spending time with Him.

INTRODUCTION:

Every child needs a father who makes a priority of spending time with them.

A recent study by the Columbia University’s National Center for Addiction and Substance abuse found that the absence or presence of a father makes a lot of difference in the psychological well-being of children. When a father is there to share meals with his children, take them to church, help them with homework and spend quality time with them, there are many desirable outcomes. Such children are much less likely to become alcoholics, drug addicts or substance abusers of any kind. Such children are much more likely to complete their education and fulfill their goals. Such children are much more likely to be happy, healthy, secure and emotionally stable. The presence of a father makes a big difference in the lives of his children, and many important benefits will accrue to them because they have spent time with him.

Conversely, the absence of the father is usually very detrimental to the well-roundedness of his children. Of course, the mother’s role is extremely important as well and cannot be minimized. But this particular study was focused on how important the presence of a father is for kids. And that presence was found to be absolutely crucial.

If an earthly father is so important to his children, how much more so is the presence of the heavenly Father in the lives

of God’s children! The more we spend time in our Father’s presence, the more likely we are to find ourselves enjoying all the wonderful benefits of His proximity to our lives. And the less time we spend in His presence, the less likely we are to enjoy and benefit from all that He wants to offer us as a Father who loves to be with His children.

One of the most important ways of spending time with our heavenly Father is through worship. It is a primary way of being with Him and experiencing His presence. And like there are benefits to hanging out with our earthly father, so there are even greater benefits of hanging out with our heavenly Father. When we worship, we open ourselves to receiving more of what God has to offer us.

Now, let’s be clear. God should be worshipped first and foremost because He is God. He deserves to be worshipped because of who He is. We should never make the mistake of deciding to worship Him because of what we will get out of it. But when we do worship Him because of who He is and what He has done, and when we spend time in His presence because it is what He deserves and what we need, then many benefits will overflow into our lives from that time spent with Him. We need time with our heavenly Father, and we can only find the deepest kind of happiness, purpose and meaning in our lives when we have a deep and intimate connection with Him.

Worship can be a place where that connection is strengthened, and we receive so many of the blessings He intends to shower on us. Let’s explore some of the benefits that come from being in God’s presence.

SERMON POINTS:

1. THE EMOTIONAL BENEFITS OF BEING IN GOD’S PRESENCE

- Psalm 16:11 is a familiar passage for many of us, and it contains a deep truth when it says that God’s presence brings joy: “You will make known to me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; in Your right hand there are pleasures forever.”

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- Worship changes our emotional state.
- You cannot find joy by looking for joy. You find joy by being in an environment of joy.
- As a child of God, if you are feeling emotionally off-center and down, it might just be that you are in the wrong place. You need to gravitate toward God's presence to find comfort, peace and joy.
- Psalm 34 deals with our experience of fear. Verse 4 says, "I sought the Lord, and He answered me, and delivered me from all my fears." Then verse 5 says, "They looked to Him and were radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed." The psalmist goes into God's presence filled with his fears, but when those fears see God, they run away. Instead of fear, there is radiance.
- Psalm 42 gives us another example. In a time of great stress and suffering, when he is down and discouraged and feeling hopeless, David finds his hope renewed through praise, for he knows that in God's presence things would begin to change.
- Instead of looking inside, we should look up. We should shift our focus from our problems to God. He can meet our every emotional need.
- We should hang around what makes us joyful and fulfilled if we want to be joyful and fulfilled. We become like what we worship (2 Kings 17:15-16).

2. THE DIRECTIONAL BENEFIT OF GOD'S PRESENCE

- When we are in God's presence, we are in the best place to receive guidance and direction for our lives.
- When Isaiah needs God's guidance for his life, he gets it by being in God's presence and being honest about his own inadequacies.
- Isaiah doesn't ask for the advice of a whole bunch of people about what he should do. He goes straight to God.
- Revelation 1:10-11 tells us that John receives his revelation from God when he is in worship ("I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day").
- If you are wanting to hear God speak, there is no better place to be than in worship.

- His still, small voice is waiting for you to listen.
- Romans 12:1-2 tells us that when we present ourselves to God that we will be transformed. God's guidance is given in His presence. God will steer us toward the place He wants us to be.

3. THE RELATIONAL BENEFIT OF GOD'S PRESENCE

- Being in the presence of God with others changes our relationships with them.
- God's presence can bring harmony and unity (Numbers 11).
- Ephesians 4 reminds us of how important the unity of the Spirit is. It is not a unity we create, but one where God Himself knits us together.
- The powerful witness of the early church arose from being in one accord through praying together (Acts 1:14).

4. THE JUDICIAL BENEFIT OF GOD'S PRESENCE

- Psalm 149 speaks of singing, praising and even dancing in worship. And in the midst of that activity, the psalmist writes that God will "execute vengeance on the nations, and punishment on the peoples."
- When we need justice in our lives, the best place for us to go is into God's presence.
- In Matthew 18, Jesus teaches about church discipline, and He says that when two or three are gathered together in His name, He is in their midst.
- Notice the context of this often-misunderstood verse. This is a promise that comes in a section where He is talking about dealing with people who are sinning.
- Authority is dispensed when God's people gather together to follow Him.
- When we gather under Jesus' authority, He will bring justice and needed correction. He will execute righteousness.



5. THE CIRCUMSTANTIAL BENEFITS OF GOD'S PRESENCE

- The presence of God can change our circumstances for the better.
- Psalm 68 lists a number of situations that can be overcome through praise.
 - * If you are lonely, orphaned, imprisoned or in need of a change in the weather (like Elijah!), you should praise God.
 - * If you are poor, surrounded by enemies, burdened or in need of deliverance, you should praise God.
- In 2 Kings 20:1-7, Hezekiah is told by the prophet that he is going to die. But Hezekiah turns toward God and God reverses His decision, and Hezekiah lives many more years.
- In God's presence you can change God's mind! There are many examples in Scripture: Moses, Jonah and more.

6. THE SPIRITUAL BENEFITS OF GOD'S PRESENCE

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 tells us that in the presence of God we can be transformed from "glory to glory."
- In His presence we become new.

SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:

OUR SURROUNDINGS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

When you are out in the sun, you cannot help but feel warm—sometimes even hot. When you are out in the snow, you cannot help but feel chilly—even painfully cold. The environment around us makes a difference. Similarly, living in the atmosphere of God's joy will naturally make you more joyful!

BEING MADE ONE

When you make pumpkin bread, you have to take all the ingredients and stir them together thoroughly. When you do that, all the separate ingredients become one substance, and a tasty one at that. It takes a lot of work to bring all the elements together, but they can be blended into something wonderful. The goal of each separate ingredient needs to be to become part of a bigger whole by being stirred together to make

something better in combination than each of the individual ingredients that go into the recipe.

CONSIDER THE BENEFITS

If we are thinking about taking a new job, one of the most important issues will be looking at the benefit package that is being offered. Sure, the salary is a critical factor, but to examine the full compensation, we must take the benefits into consideration. The amount of the salary only tells us what we will get right now, but the benefits tell us what we will get in the long run. Health benefits and retirement benefits are about making our future secure as well. In the presence of God, we find the ultimate benefits package.

QUOTES BY DR. TONY EVANS:

"When joy has escaped you, it is time to worship. When life has crushed in on you, it is time to worship. When the devil has robbed you of joy it is time to worship."

"The church began in a prayer meeting—not a preaching service!"

"When you are in His presence, you are before His face, and it is like a mirror. When you look into the presence of God, His glory beams back on you, and you become changed."

