

AFTER GOD'S HEART (PART 4) A PASSIONATE HEART

Opening Prayer

Group sharing

1. Share things you are passionate about.
2. In what ways have you gone crazy after receiving good news?
3. Share a time when you celebrated or worshipped with abandon!

Act One – Uzzah Dies

"They set the ark of God on a new cart and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, sons of Abinadab, were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it, and Ahio was walking in front of it. David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals. When they came to the threshing floor of Nacon, Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God, because the oxen stumbled. The Lord's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; therefore God struck him down and he died there beside the ark of God."

-2 Samuel 6:3-7

We are told that the Lord was angry because of Uzzah's irreverent act. This event stunned all who were there, including David. But all these centuries later, it stuns us too. We look at Uzzah's reflexive action to protect the ark, and we don't quite understand why God killed him. It makes God seem so mean to us.

Uzzah's action was not just a mistake of the moment. More likely, it was a piece of his life-long obsession with managing the ark. Uzzah was trying to take control of God. He had long ago lost sight of who was really in charge. But our God made it clear that he will not be managed, and that he expects us to obey fully his instructions.

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The ark was never intended to be transported on a cart. The only way it was to be moved was on the shoulders of the Levites holding the golden poles. Never was the ark to be touched by human hands. But Uzzah thought he had a better plan, and he took a more convenient route. He did not revere God's name nor God's plan. While Uzzah's whole life as a priest was supposedly focused on God, his heart was actually far from his Creator. This erosion, unfortunately, happens to a lot of people.

We can so easily lose sight of appropriate reverence, awe and love for God.

4. In what ways have you found yourself losing sight of who God really is?

5. What disciplines have you placed in your life's journey to keep God in focus?

Act Two – David Dances

“So David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf. David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets.” -2 Samuel 6:12b-15

We sometimes get fuzzy about why it is that we worship.

Worship is our natural response to the wonder of who God is. Worship is the natural, heartfelt, genuine, emotional response to the character, the works, and the grace of God.

Just as Uzzah did not die all of a sudden, David did not dance all of a sudden. Uzzah didn't get careless with the things of God overnight. And David regularly filled his mind with God. David's expression in public worship was simply the result of his practicing God's presence in private ways through many moments of his day.

How can you and I be stoic if we really see the greatness and the goodness of our God? This side of heaven, we'll never be able to fully express to God our love for him. But we can try with all our might to magnify his name!

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“David danced. In God, David had access to life that exceeded his capacity to measure or control. He was on the edge of mystery, of glory, and so he danced. When we’re going about our work responsibly and steadily, we walk. But when we’re beside ourselves with love, shaken out of preoccupation with ourselves, we dance. David danced. If David had been merely carrying out his religious duties, or conducting a political ceremony, he would have walked in solemn procession before the ark, leading it into Jerusalem with dignity. But this was no duty. He was worshiping, responding to the living God.” -Eugene Peterson

6. How many here like to dance?

7. How many are closet dancers?

Scripture describes a variety of physical postures in connection with worship, including standing, kneeling, clapping, lifting the hands, lying prostrate, lifting or bowing the head, and dancing. Our physical expression should be consistent with the inner spirit of worship.

When we’re humbled before God, in an attitude of confession, kneeling or lying down may be appropriate postures. Celebration calls for some kind of movement. Now, we have a variety of temperaments and backgrounds, and this is true. We must certainly be respectful of that.

But we need to take some little risks along the way and make sure that our focus is not on preserving our image or our reputation. Worship is a daring adventure, and I would suggest that worship without any physical expression is limited. So here’s the deal: The next time the Spirit prompts you to uncross your arms, go for it! The alternative is to end up as dead as Uzzah was, and none of us wants that!

8. When have you been so filled up with gratitude toward God that you feel like you’re going to burst unless you express it?

9. What keeps us from being comfortable with physical expressions of worship?

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Act Three – Michal Despised

“When David returned home to bless his household, Michal daughter of Saul came out to meet him and said, ‘How the king of Israel has distinguished himself today, disrobing in the sight of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would!’ David said to Michal, ‘It was before the Lord, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when he appointed me ruler over the Lord’s people Israel — I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor.’ And Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.”

-2 Samuel 6:20-23

Michal despises David for what she considers inappropriate and undignified behavior. She thought David ought to look more “kingly,” to surround himself with pomp and circumstance, to be more aloof and inaccessible. Michal was embarrassed by David’s exuberance, but she was also filled with contempt.

Michal’s own heart could not feel joy or adoration because her own feelings for God were dead. Michal was, in many ways, as dead as Uzzah.

10. In what ways can we become like Michal?

Worship is the time, maybe the only time, when we interrupt our endless preoccupation with ourselves and turn our attention toward God.

“The glory of God is a human fully alive.” -Irennaeus

David was fully alive. He loved God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, with all his strength, and he danced before the Lord with all his might.

We’re not going to get worship completely right until heaven, when we’re free from our sin and when we’re free from our awareness of ourselves. But between now and then, we can practice. We can come to God with our full obedience, carrying the poles on our shoulders, following him as best we can.

11. What are some daily disciplines that can help us keep our thoughts on the goodness and the greatness of our God?

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David had his days to praise the Lord. Now it is our day, it is our time on this earth. David had the Ark of the Covenant, but we have the risen Christ. We have the Holy Spirit who has taken up residence in our hearts and is with us every moment of every day!