

Chapter 10

PRAISE

“Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me.” Psalm 50:23.

NO ONE knows why, but there is something about praising God and describing our testimony to other people that changes us.

Let’s examine a small sentence of counsel for the church: “And not only should the prayer meeting be faithfully attended, but as often as once each week a praise meeting should be held...and our thoughts and desires will be brought into submission to the will of Christ.” ⁽¹⁾

Praise is a necessary component of “Spiritual Exercise.” It allows the saint to express inner feelings and somehow confirms in the mind and heart the feelings expressed.

Sometime in the previous century the Seventh-day Adventist church stopped having “Praise” meetings. The Sabbath services used to begin with Sabbath School, followed by Church Worship service, and then a break for a communal lunch, except for Battle Creek where many people lived within walking distance and could conveniently go home. There was then an afternoon service called the “Social” meeting that consisted of a short inspirational talk and a praise service or an allocation of time for

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people to stand before each other and praise God, and give their testimony.

As this service was phased out, atrophy took its place, and lights began dimming and going out. It's unfortunate because this is a vital step in maintaining a vibrant church community. We can look at the historical record and see the results. From the early 1900's through today the church in North America changed. It's become nothing but a form for many of our members. Some churches are cold and lifeless as members meet each week for the worship service and listen as a discouraged pastor attempts to pump life into the body of God.

But let's face it, adding another service to our church culture is a large change. This is not a small thing to consider. For instance, we need to decide when it should be held. Many churches don't have potluck lunches very often, so Sabbath afternoon might not work for them. Some churches have a very scattered flock, and much cost is involved in commuting.

It matters not what the reasons for delay or avoidance, the need remains.

Those of you reading this manuscript, yes you—you are responsible for your own salvation; you have the ability to meet in homes, if necessary. Small groups can meet to praise God and elevate your spirituality as you share your faith with each other and express your response to the love of God.

Such a meeting might begin with any number of hymns. There are many hymns of praise that are vigorous and lively. There are many such hymns that bring to mind the glorious advent that we await. There are many such hymns that remind us of the 'hope' that motivated our Adventist pioneers.

Praise

The Praise meeting might include a vesper talk, a reading, or a video tape of encouragement, followed by an opportunity for each and every person to stand and share their feelings.

A generous sprinkling of prayer should attend these testimonies, followed by a prayer of personal consecration.

The meeting need not be lengthy, but at times specific topics might require more time. But the process will bring souls together and create a more vibrant relationship between created and Creator.

We are instructed that “The more we praise God, the more we shall have to praise him for, and our hearts will become attuned to his praise.” ⁽²⁾

We are also counseled that “We are not to bring complaints and murmurings into our testimony in the social meeting, but we are to talk of the blessed hope, to reflect as much light as possible upon the meeting.” ⁽³⁾

As we praise God we receive other benefits, for we are counselled that “Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings,—as much a duty as it is to pray.” ⁽⁴⁾

Spiritual Exercises are a very private and personal matter. If we were to force any member of the church to join one or more of these components, it would probably be counterproductive. This must be from the heart, and it must be desired. These exercises are the foundation of the Christian life.

I can already hear you asking, “Are you sure? Isn’t Jesus the foundation of the Christian life?”

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Your comment is well-taken, but the Spiritual Exercises are all about Jesus. They are like a military exercise that is demanded by a higher authority; they are like a train schedule as it allocates all the necessary resources in the life to make sure the soul connects with and remains connected with God through the Holy Spirit. We have to be tough with ourselves to make it happen. And we need to recognize that this is an individual thing. Husbands, wives or children may not want to participate, and that should not deter us. We are talking here of eternal life and happiness.

REFERENCES

- 1 *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 4, page 461.
- 2 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 28, 1889.
- 3 *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 12, 1889.
- 4 *The Review and Herald*, June 2, 1910.