

The Power of A Proper Perspective: A Meditation For Worship Teams

by Charles Barrett



Let's look at 1 Samuel 17:45-47: "David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defeated. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's and he will give all of you into our hands.'"

Sisters and brothers, David was acutely aware of the fundamental reality that it was not in and of his own strength that he was able to defeat the giant; after all, he was just a puny shepherd boy. In other words, it was not David's actions, or behavior, which led to victory. It was his proper perspective—which was focused on the All-Powerful God—that ultimately led to victory for David and Israel.

Looking closer, this principle is also appropriate to consider even as we prepare to minister this weekend in song and dance. Our focus theme is PRAISE. As it was not David's actions that led to victory in 1 Samuel 17, the same remains true today. God is never impressed by our behaviors. Because he is God, and he knows all things and controls all things, it is impossible to manipulate him with our actions. After all, as the Alpha and Omega, he is not only the beginning and the end, but he also knows the end from the beginning! God is not a "genie in a bottle" that we can "rub the right way" in order to manufacture a desired result. So not only as we minister about praise, but also as we praise God each day of our lives, it is imperative that we internalize this fundamental principle: our praise is not the necessary element to our blessings. And praise is not the master key that "unlocks every door," which lead to God's promises. Let's look closer...

Joshua 6 and 2 Chronicles 20 offer two accounts of praise as a weapon of spiritual warfare. In the Joshua text, the children of Israel marched around the walls of Jericho for seven days, released a thunderous shout of praise, and the walls came tumbling down (see verses 13, 14, 15,

and 20). In 2 Chronicles chapter 20, as they were warring against the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites, the worshippers—singers and musicians—praised God ahead of the army and were victorious (see verses 1 and 22). A cursory glance at both passages seems to suggest that praise was the common element, which ultimately led to victory. There is, however, a more important truth, which has greater implications than praise.

It is important to note that in both situations there was a clear word from the Lord! God told his people what he expected them to do. Joshua 6: 2-5: “Then the LORD said to Joshua, ‘See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands along with its king and its fighting men. March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days.’” 2 Chronicles 20:15-17: “He said: ‘Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God’s. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.’”

These passages show that God, through his servants, gave his people specific instructions. Parenthetically, know that God continues to speak clearly, even today. And the best part is that he will speak directly to you!

But returning to our premise that our blessings and victories are never predicated upon our actions, the take-home message is simple and found in 1 Samuel 15:22: “But Samuel replied: ‘Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice and to heed is better than the fat of rams.’” Sisters and brothers, the victories experienced in Joshua 6 and 2 Chronicles 20 were not the result of praise as a behavior. It was a function of the people’s obedience to the word of the Lord. As their obedience was greater than any sacrifice, including praise, doing what the Lord said they should do is what enabled them to triumph. Focusing on being obedient to God always provides us the proper perspective for whatever we do, especially worship.

These words are recorded by the Psalmist in the first five verses of the 92nd division of Psalms: “It is a good thing to praise the LORD and make music to your name, O Most High, to proclaim your love in the morning and your faithfulness at night, to the music of the ten-stringed lyre and the melody of the harp. For you make me glad by your deeds, O LORD; I sing for joy at the works of your hands. How great are your works, O LORD, how profound your thoughts!”

It is, however, an even better thing to obey God. I hope that you and your Worship and Arts Ministry benefit from this meditation. Feel free to use it at any time of the year. Look on the homepage and in the **Young Adult Liturgists’ Corner** for future meditations specifically designed for Worship and Arts Ministries.