

LOVERS

IN A DANGEROUS TIME



EVERYDAY
HABITS
FOR
FAITH
FORMATION

SUMMIT DRIVE CHURCH
JANUARY//FEBRUARY 2021

PART FOUR: EMBODIMENT



" SING TO THE
LORD A NEW
SONG, FOR HE HAS
DONE MARVELOUS
THINGS"
- PSALM 98:1

PART FOUR: SING IT OUT

Engaging our whole selves in worship

"One more time...with feeling." I was, I admit, in musical theatre in my grade 12 year. Truth be told, I saw the list of the girls who had signed up and said "count me in!" On a more serious note, the cast did form meaningful friendships in the process of the long, challenging rehearsals, where we worked hard on training our voices to tell the story well. Something about the singing together formed a sense of community.

There is something special about the musical element of storytelling, isn't there? It's particularly upfront in musicals. Consider why the animated Disney movies are so classic in our minds. Isn't it the songs that are primary in our memories of these movies? When I think of a Disney movie, I think - and hear - "A whole new world!", or "Hakuna Matata...", or "Hi, Ho, Hi, Ho, it's off to work I go..." Songs stick. Songs have the ability to get inside of us in a way that mere words cannot. Songs tell us stories as well. Depending on the song, some are true. Others, far from it.

In my grade 12 year I was also part of a quartet with some friends, with just our voices, where we sang Christmas Carols in front of shops to raise money for the food bank. Singing, just our voices, in praise of God and for the sake of caring for the community. And singing *this* story, *this* song - that celebrates the glory of what God was doing in sending his Son - was a wholly (and holy) other sort of experience. God's love and generosity call us to respond with generosity and love, too. There's something particularly beautiful about connecting our voices in praise of God.

In Zephaniah 3:17 we find out that God himself 'sings', in love and with rejoicing, over his people. So at least one reason God wants us to sing, is that God sings - and he wants us to be like him. Singing together also engages our minds, and memories, and emotions, and desires, and bodies, and serves our unity as God's own people. No wonder it has such a large place in the Biblical storyline - from the song of Moses and Miriam (Ex 15) to the Song of the Lamb (Rev 5), and the many others in-between.



REFLECT

01 READ PSALM 98

Many people find singing in a community a challenge. Maybe feeling self-conscious about their voice or singing ability, or simply feeling awkward because it is such an 'outward' act. What about you? Look at how Psalm 98 encourages us in regards to singing - and it assumes a corporate context of a worship service.

- a. In these nine short verses, what instructions and direct commands do you notice?
- b. Who is being called on to respond to God in praise?
- c. What are some of the reasons the Psalmist gives for this all-of-creation-singing-together-in-celebration text?
- d. How does this text encourage or challenge you?

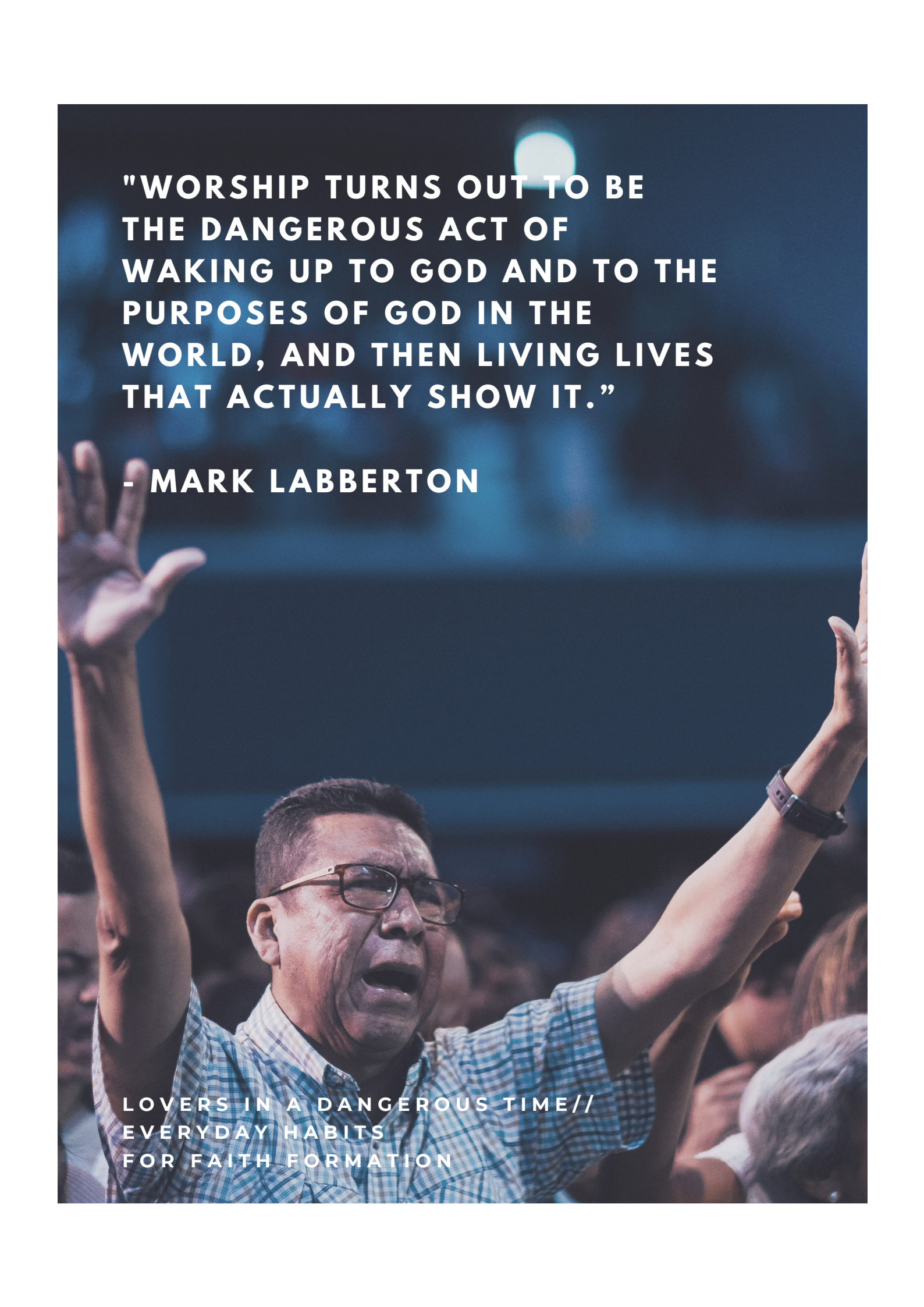
02 READ COLOSSIANS 3:15-17

In this passage Paul is offering instructions about how the community is to "Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly," and it is specifically through the habit of singing when we gather.

- a. What is the "message of Christ" and why does the Christian community need to let it "dwell among us richly"?
- b. Why do you think Paul includes these three different forms of songs? How have the different forms of songs helped you grow in your faith?

03 PRAYER FOCUS

With your Life Group, your family, your prayer partner, or on your own, take some time to give thanks to God for the reality of his great love that is revealed through Jesus. Perhaps use this time to sing a song together - even with just your voices.

A photograph of a man in a church, wearing glasses and a blue and white checkered shirt, with his arms raised in a gesture of worship. The background is dark with blue lighting, suggesting a church service. The text is overlaid on the top half of the image.

**"WORSHIP TURNS OUT TO BE
THE DANGEROUS ACT OF
WAKING UP TO GOD AND TO THE
PURPOSES OF GOD IN THE
WORLD, AND THEN LIVING LIVES
THAT ACTUALLY SHOW IT."**

- MARK LABBERTON

**LOVERS IN A DANGEROUS TIME //
EVERYDAY HABITS
FOR FAITH FORMATION**

PRACTICE//SINGING

Lifting up our voices *to* God and *for* each other

In Colossians 3:16 we see that we sing to God, but also for the sake of each other. As put by Tyler Horton: "There will always be people among us who are struggling to see and believe the good news of Jesus Christ. Every time the church gathers there are people...who need sturdy reminders that they are amongst people who know these things are true. The way to approach public worship is to sing as though the person three seats up from you desperately needs a reminder that the words you are singing are true. Because the reality is, they do." Indeed - they do need that reminder. Sometimes *we* do. So we sing because God is worthy of our worship, and in doing so, we encourage each other. Christ's word dwells among us!

1. **Prioritize Corporate Worship.** In Luke 4 we find Jesus return to his hometown of Nazareth, "...and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, *as was his custom*" (4:16). If you followed Jesus - were his disciples while he walked on earth - you would find yourself in gathered, corporate worship: Every. Single. Week. You would also find yourself singing in the in's and out's of the day (Matt 26:30). Jesus prioritized gathered worship because it honours God, encourages others, and shapes us around the true story of God that sends us back into the world on mission with God. Missionary, Lesslie Newbigin, says: "the weekly gathering for worship is by far the most important thing we do." Yes, a *missionary* said that. We prioritize gathered worship and actively participate in raising our voices.



**"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS! I WILL SAY IT AGAIN: REJOICE!"
- PHILIPPIANS 4:4**

2. **Sing regularly in your home.** One great practice is to sing "The Doxology" as Table Grace. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow...." We just sing the simple, four line hymn. Here is a chance to pause over your evening meal and engage your voice as well as your heart and mind in giving thanks to God. Augustine, in the 5th C, wrote: "Whoever sings prays twice." We're praying with our minds and hearts engaged, but also our bodies. One great resource that puts Psalms to songs - as they were intended - is a project by Poor Bishop Hooper called "Every Psalm" that you can access via YouTube.

3. **Sing Anyways.** Our culture highly values authenticity (which is great if what we mean is 'honesty'), but that often plays out in the sense that being "authentic" means never doing something we don't *feel like*. That would be a mistake. We may not *feel like* singing. The Psalmist speaks to his own heart, however, and says: "Bless the Lord, O my soul..." (Ps 103:1). Rather than waiting to *feel like* praising God, speak to your heart about your decision to praise God.

You'll likely find that the act of choosing to worship actually reignites your "affections" (to use the language of Jonathan Edwards) and realigns your heart around the realities of God's worth. It is one of the reasons, I think, that God has gifted us with music and commanded that we sing: it "works on us" at an emotional level - helping draw us toward the truth of God in a way that words alone cannot. So don't wait until you "feel like" singing - sing because God is worthy, and because in so doing, you are also reminding yourself and others of the story of God's love.

Sometimes we don't sing - in a church worship time or in our homes - because we are self-conscious. We live in an age of 'superstars' and professionals, so we are subtly 'pressured' to leave the singing up to those who 'have a voice.' But as Bob Kauflin put it: "The question is not "Do you have a voice" but "Do you have a *song*?" And we do! We let the message of Christ dwell richly among us as we sing that message to God, and for each other. Read Revelation 15:3-4.