CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

SERMON NOTES & TRANSCRIPT

Vibrant Worship

Here We Grow, Part 3

The garment of praise is something you put on, not something you wait to feel. When we show up, take a posture of worship and participate, we change the atmosphere for the people around us and position ourselves to receive from God.

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SERIES
Here We Grow, Week 3 of 3

MAIN TEXT
Isaiah 61:1-3

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01

Sermon Transcript

Amen. Well, if you have your Bibles, I'd invite you to turn with me to Isaiah chapter 61. Isaiah 61. Now listen, I'm not going to stay here. We're going to kind of take a tour around the Bible today. I don't know if you've ever been to Epcot, but we're going to take a tour around the World Pavilion today. Amen. And so, if you haven't been to Disney, we just believe God's going to bless you in this season and increase you, and you too will be able to pay $8,000 for one day of extreme heat and terrible food. That's the greatest lie they tell, is that the food at Disney's great. No, I don't think so.

All right. All right. So the last few weeks, we've been in a series called Here We Grow. Here we grow. Here we go. Everybody say, "Here we grow." Here we grow. Here we grow. We've been in a series called Here We Grow. We're growing. We're growing as a church. Some of us are growing physically, amen. But we're growing as a church. We're seeing God do a great work here in our church. And so this month, what we've been doing is we've been treating every service like a staff meeting. One big staff meeting over three weeks.

And every staff meeting, what I do with our team is I teach them, I tell them where we're going, and then I tell them what I need from them. Two weeks ago, I taught you. Last week, I told you where we're going. And this week, I'm going to tell you what I need from you. I'm going to talk to you about what I need from you. If you're sitting here right now, I need this from you. Now, I want you to hear this. This will be a good opportunity for me to preach on giving, 'cause we need you to be generous unto the Lord. I just want to remind you, you never give to your pastor, you never give to the church.

You give to the Lord. Okay? That's how you release the blessing. But we need you to do that, but that's not what I'm going to preach on today. I could also preach on the need for you to join the team and serve in ministry, which we need you to join the team and serve in ministry. We have grown so much in children's ministry since we got here that we need some people to step up and serve in children's ministry. I want to tell you what's happening. I'm not planning on this, but let me just tell you what's happening in our children's ministry right now, aside from opening our brand-new space upstairs that's fully renovated for your kids.

But when we got here, we didn't know week to week if any children were going to show up. So we had contingency plans in every classroom that we may, you know, we may only have one kid in this classroom, and we'll combine at this point, or if no kids show up, this is how long the people serving in ministry stay in there. Last week, we had 35 kids in church — in kids ministry. And so we need you to join the team, because we got kids coming out our ears now, and we're going to have more coming, and so we, like, need help. Let me tell you what we're going to do to help kind of assist that in this season.

We are moving over the next few weeks to a system where we're going to have volunteers in all of kids ministry except nursery. And in the nursery, we will be paying nursery workers to be here. We want to do that for two reasons. One reason is I think it's going to be good for our parents who are coming and they're here for the first time. The little babies are the hardest ones to let go of, right? By the time they're four, you can — yeah, sure, you can watch them. Yeah. Charles Manson, here you go. Just an hour, they'll be fine for an hour, you know?

And so the babies, we need to have some professional people. Which our nursery people do a great job. Let's give them a hand. But the other thing it's going to allow me to do is get those good nursery workers out of there and move them into those other volunteer areas for kids. And so it kind of helps us maximize our volunteers for kids. So we're working on that. That's coming up. So I could tell you I need you to serve. But that's not what I'm going to preach on this morning either. What I want to talk to you about this morning is I want to talk to you about vibrant worship.

Vibrant worship. Everybody say vibrant. Vibrant. Vibrant. I'm talking about vibrant worship this morning. Now I want to be clear, 'cause I know the pushback and the feedback I'm going to get if I don't say this. Heck, I'm going to get it even if I do say this, but just for my own conscience. I'm not talking about worship proper today. That's not what I'm talking about, because there'll always be the pushbacks of, "Well, that's not worship. Worship is really this, and worship's really..." Everybody's got an opinion on what worship is, like the Bible doesn't tell us what it is. Sorry.

And it's amazing to me how many people have problems with stuff that, like, it's right there. Black and white. So when I talk about worship today, though, I'm not talking about worship proper. I'm talking about what happens inside of a Sunday morning service. I'm talking about the thing that happens when we come into the room together. So I'm talking about more or less the atmosphere that is happening in this room, the atmosphere of a church service. And let me just tell you, when it comes to worship, if I was to talk to you about worship proper, the way you live and the way you give reflect your worship more than anything we do in here on a Sunday morning.

It doesn't matter if we sing two songs or 28 songs, the way you live and the way you give really tell us who you worship. So I want to say this too, because I want to ask some things of you this morning. I want to instruct our church today, 'cause today's the day I tell you what I need. But I do want to just acknowledge this. Similar to our children's ministry growing over the last year, I want you to know that the atmosphere of this room from the day I got here to now has come a thousand light years. Y'all are way more fun to preach to than when I got here.

When y'all stared at me for 45 minutes — and that's why I preached so short when I got here, 'cause I was like, you know, at some point it's just uncomfortable, amen. And so there's a lively atmosphere. There's a fun atmosphere. Our worship is lively. It's — I would say it's kicking, amen, in Jesus' name. We got some kicking music around here, and now we got a kicking drummer and a kicking keyboard player, amen. Next week we're going to have a kicking banjo player, hallelujah, and I wouldn't know what to do with a banjo player if I had one, to be honest with y'all. I just do whatever you do, I guess.

And so I just want to acknowledge we've come a long way, but we have a long way to go. Well, today we've gotta take the next step. It's the week before back to church Sunday. We're just a few months before a major pivot in our church, and this is an area that we have to get on board together and we have to attack because of the benefits that are involved in it. Go with me now to Isaiah chapter 61. Isaiah 61, starting in verse one. This is the anointing that was upon Jesus, and I want to pull something out of it real quick.

This is a Messianic prophecy, but I want to pull just a little piece of this out that has shaped my view of corporate worship for many years. And I should probably also lead with this, for those of you that don't know, I was just the worship guy for 10 to 12 years. So I've lived behind the keyboard. I've camped out behind the keyboard. Don't let the bad notes and the wrong notes fool you. I used to do it all the time, but so I have some background here. But the funny thing is I never preach on it.

I never really preach on this stuff. I just kind of lead. But today we're going to look at something. So this has shaped me greatly.

> **ISAIAH 61:1-3** ESV
>
> 1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he
> has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to
> those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to
> comfort all who mourn; 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of
> ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be
> called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

Isaiah chapter 61, starting in verse one. It says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." Man, if you don't want to shout right there, my God, that's good. "To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor," hallelujah, "and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn."

Now, verse three, I want you to pay attention with me. "To grant to those who mourn in Zion, to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit, that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified." Keep this up for me for just a moment. Isaiah 61. You'll notice here that I have three things highlighted — or I have two things highlighted. I meant to have three. It says a beautiful headdress, the oil of gladness, and then there's a third one there, the garment of praise.

I want you to notice that all three things that serve as a solution in Isaiah 61 to these issues — every issue is internal. It's mourning. It's a heavy spirit, a faint spirit. Every one of the solutions is something that you put on. It's oil, it's a headdress, it's a garment of praise. It's something you put on. And I just want to let you know this morning that participation in worship — 'cause that's what we're going to talk about today — participation in worship is not going to come to you. I've heard it for years. People say, "Well, I don't want to do that when the worship leader tells me. I want to do it when I feel it."

The feeling ain't coming. The feeling ain't coming. You can't walk through hell for six days a week, walk in here, and sing a couple of songs, and all of a sudden just say, "Oh, I just feel like magnifying the Lord." No. There's a reason that we crucify the flesh. It's 'cause the things we feel like doing often aren't the things we ought to do. And we don't feel like doing the things we ought to do. And I just want you to know, if you're waiting, if you're coming in here and you're waiting to get inspired to the point that you respond, that will not happen.

I'm not good enough. Barry's not good enough. Jeremy's not good enough. We thought about getting Pastor John up here, but I don't think he's got any hope either. Amen. None of us are good enough. You're going to have to come in and at some point you just make a decision and say, "I'm going to participate." That moment to get involved, you're going to have to make that decision. You have to in some great degree put it on. You have to put it on. You just have to make that decision. Your participation in worship matters, because your participation in worship is much like a water balloon.

You come in and you worship, and you've lived under the assumption, because this is what we've been taught, that you come in and in those few songs, that's when you worship. And so you think you come in, and you worship, and you engage, and you make much of the Lord, and that's that. No, that's not true. It's like a water balloon. Can I have an usher help back here real quick? Find someone a seat. But when you have a moment where you lift your hands and you begin to worship, and you lift your voice, and you magnify the Lord, it's like a water balloon.

As soon as it hits, it splatters and it touches a lot of stuff. It affects a lot of things around it. It's not isolated in its impact. It affects a lot of things. And when you worship in the room, when you come in and you worship, it impacts the atmosphere in a way that can change people's lives. And oftentimes, God doesn't need your worship in the service so much as the people sitting in the room need your worship in the service. There is something about coming in with a spirit of heaviness and saying, "I'm going to put a garment of praise on."

Talking about the impact of an atmosphere of vibrant worship. Amen. And it does benefit you, but I'm going to get to that towards the end. So here, I want to talk about vibrant worship this morning, and I don't have a lot of notes, but I don't plan on being quick. So we'll talk about vibrant worship. Let's jump right in. Number one, number one, vibrant worship requires physical presence. Vibrant worship requires physical presence. Showing up matters. Showing up matters. We tell people this in business that you can't go up unless you show up.

> **HEBREWS 10:24-25** ESV
>
> 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together,
> as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Showing up matters to the degree that the author of Hebrews says this in Hebrews 10: "And let us consider how to stir one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." I don't know about you, but I'm feeling the day drawing near a little bit. I'm feeling things happening. And now is the time not to go be away from church. Now's the time to be in church. Now's the time to show up. You gotta show up. There's something about showing up.

And the thing is, everybody that I've noticed that says that they don't need to come to church, and they can hear from the Lord on their own, they're all weird and dysfunctional. I don't want to be like those people, I want to be like these people. I want to show up. I want to show up. So there's a benefit in showing up. But I had an executive coach years ago who asked a different question when it came to showing up. He asked me something, and actually, I thought the question was quite annoying. I did not like it when he asked it to me, 'cause he gave me no preference or no preface on this.

But he asked this. He said, "How do you show up?" How do you show up? Showing up is one thing. How you show up is entirely another. Do you show up ready to receive? Do you show up ready to respond? Do you show up ready for church? Do you show up ready for the presence of the Lord? If we had a moment, if we had that moment where something shifted in a service, we throw the plan out, the glory of God falls, people are getting healed, deliverance is falling out, relationships are getting restored, people have got money showing up in their bank accounts, which is the miracle I'm looking for.

And so if we had that moment, would you be ready? Come on. Would you have come into that moment with a good attitude? Would you come into that moment with a bad attitude? Would you come into that moment ready to receive, or would you have walked into that moment going, "Oh, I can't believe they do this, and I liked it better when it used to be like this, and I don't like it when this happens," and it's too hot or it's too cold, or it's too bright or it's too dark, or the LED screen is too nice and the preacher's too good-looking. Hallelujah.

Do you come in? How do you show up? How do you show up? How you show up matters. In Luke 15 — y'all gotta forgive me, I'm preaching my voice out already. I need to calm down. But I showed up ready to preach. Amen. That's why I'm

walking all around up here. In Luke 15, you have a story of the prodigal son, and the son goes off and he squanders his inheritance that his father gives him, who obviously was a wealthy man.

> **LUKE 15:11-32 ESV**
>
> 11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give
> me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days
> later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his
> property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he
> began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him
> into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him
> anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than
> enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I
> have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of
> your hired servants."' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw
> him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have
> sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his
> servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.
> 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive
> again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. 25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he
> came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked
> what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened
> calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father
> came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I
> never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends.
> 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened
> calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to
> celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

He squanders his inheritance, and he comes back home, and the father's so glad that he comes back home that he throws him a party.

And while he's throwing him a party, the elder son, his older brother, is out in the field, and he gets angry as he walks towards the house because they're throwing a party for the other son. And there's a lot of conjecture on why he felt that way and why he did this and why he did that, but I can tell you why he was upset. It's 'cause he wasn't in the house. He was outside the house. He wasn't in the house. You gotta get in the house. Nobody's upset when they're in the house. When you get in the house and you make a decision to be in the house and to be excited.

Some of y'all just gotta make a decision, "I'm going to get where the party's going on." And we used to say this, "There ain't no party like a Holy Ghost party, 'cause a Holy Ghost party don't stop." And so you gotta get into church, amen. You gotta get in the house. You gotta get where the party's going on. Have you made a decision to show up ready to receive?

Number two, number two, write this down: vibrant worship involves — or I'm sorry, vibrant worship revolves around physical posture. I'm going to set this back over here before I spill it on myself and we have a whole thing. I hit my microphone, bit my tongue in worship. I ain't trying to take no more chances in this service today. We live with great risk for you on Sunday morning. Amen.

Vibrant worship revolves around physical posture. This is the majority of what I want to talk to you about this morning, so point two is what I really want you to grab ahold of this morning. So this is the time to lean in. You can start ignoring me again in about 15 minutes. Amen. Every church, I need you to understand this, every church requires some level of physical involvement and physical posturing to participate in worship.

If you go to a Catholic church, they will do the sign of the cross. Okay? If you go to a Methodist church, they're going to have you walk down to the front to receive communion, where you drink after your 150 closest friends. If you're Baptist, you have to stand in line for the potluck. Every church has some physical response they're looking for. Amen. Every church has an expectation of some physical involvement. We are an openly Spirit-filled church. And we ought to worship like one.

We ought to worship like a Spirit-filled church. Now, when I say that, a lot of people start wondering a lot of things, so I'm going to be clear today. Well, listen, you can misunderstand me, but it's not going to be because I didn't talk about it. It's going to be because I said too much about it. Now, I want y'all to know, I am saved, sanctified, full of the Holy Ghost. I am ready to go. I'm starting to dip back in the archive of old worship songs I'm trying to bring back, and I'm just determined we're going to be a church for people who like to have church.

This is a church. This isn't a seminar. This isn't how to do this in three easy steps. This is church. This is the place where you can come and hear a whole lot of nothing, and it still be a whole lot of something. Amen. We're going to have church in this church. But I need you to hear me. When it comes to worship, as Pentecostal as I am, as Spirit-filled as I am, as charismatic as I am, I need y'all to know I've been doing this a long time, and I've just made a decision that I am a no-accessories-included worship leader.

Okay. Y'all know the toys that come with all the things? Y'all know, you can get the Easy-Bake Oven that comes with the ingredients. That's an accessory, or you can get the one that don't have that stuff. That's a no accessories. I'm a no-accessories-included worship leader. We're building a no-accessories-included worship experience. If you want to know what that means, that means that Worship Jane does not come with a shofar. Praise Peter does not come with a banner that he waves.

If you bring a tambourine into this church, not only do we not allow it, you might go to hell. Just want to toss it out there and let you know it's severe. You know what's funny? We used to do that, and it was terrible to do it back... Now we have in-ear monitors, and 100 tambourines could set loose on the church, we'd never know the difference, amen. But back in the day, they'd be going off. We'd be trying to play with the drummer, and there's, you know, it's like a schizophrenic episode is what it felt like, amen. And so we don't have that stuff.

I've had some people roll in here and ask. We're not doing no ribbons. And I was leading, or I was playing bass at a church one time in Silver Spring, Maryland, and we're playing. Guys over here leading worship, and I'm playing, and the next thing I know, dancers have appeared out of nowhere. All around. I ain't never had backup dancers until that moment. It was crazy, y'all. And so we're just no accessories included. That stuff is fine, but here's the deal. What I have found is typically it's a distraction that turns into a discussion that I'm going to have to have with them and with whoever's bringing it to me.

And then, and also, this is just, folks, some of this stuff I've just been around a long time. You just need to hear me. There's a real fine line between this stuff we like to involve in worship and an idol. Because when you start hearing things like, "Well, I can't worship without my tambourine," well, honey, I think that might be a problem. That might be an issue. So we're a no-accessories-included worship experience here at Saraland Church. I just want to be clear about that. We don't do tambourines, we don't do shofars, we don't do flags, we don't do weapons. Which is an issue.

You might not believe it. I have a friend who was a worship leader at a church where everything went... Which I do recommend visit them when you're on vacation. Find the weirdest church you can just for entertainment. And the church had a big communion table. And I don't know what was going on at the time, but they had put a big sword, like an Excalibur sword, down there. He said he's over here singing and playing, you know, and he's directing the band and everything. He looks down and he notices in the front of the church, this guy has come up and he has taken the sword off of the table.

Okay. And he's down in the front worshiping the Lord with the sword. And he says, "I'm watching." And he says, "And next thing I know, he takes it and he goes over in front of the senior pastor, and he gets down on one knee and puts the sword down in the floor and holds the handle right here." His pastor's name was Charles. I said, "What did Charles do?" He said, "What do you think he did? He knighted him." What else do you do? Amen. So we don't use weapons. Amen. Hallelujah. But we are going to be an actively involved worshiping church. This is not going to be a sorry little nothing-happens worship experience here at Saraland Church.

We're going to get involved in worship. Amen. If you are involved in worship, I'm going to ask more from you. If you aren't involved in worship, praise God, you're about to be able to take a step. Amen. Hallelujah. So I want to talk through a handful of things this morning in terms of involvement, but I think Ezra chapter 3 gives a good picture of what an involved, vibrant worship experience and atmosphere looks like.

> **EZRA 3:11-13** ESV
>
> 11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love
> endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord,
> because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of
> fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of
> this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not distinguish the sound
> of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the
> sound was heard far away.

Ezra chapter 3, starting in verse 11, it says, "And they sang responsively. They sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, 'For He is good and His steadfast love endures forever toward Israel.'"

And towards the church of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen. "And all the people shouted with a great shout. They shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and the Levites and heads of the fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy" — so listen to that — "they were sorrowful." They were mourning. They were crying, but there was a shout for joy.

They came in with a spirit of heaviness, but there was a garment of praise. Verse 13: "So that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping." 'Cause when you come in, you need to be able to go, "I don't know if he's happy, if he's sad. Something's happening with him, 'cause he's in a great atmosphere." "For the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away." I had a preacher tell me one time that the difference between praise and worship is that worship is vertical. Worship is between you and the Lord, but praise is horizontal.

It's letting everybody else know that God is good, that His steadfast love endures throughout generations. It's letting people know what Jesus has done in your life, and I feel like most of you sitting in here know, so I would love to see it that when we give the Lord praise and glory and honor, that we start shouting and making such a commotion that from far off, man, I tell you, I want Shelton Beach Road, people driving by, to go, "What is happening in that church?" Amen. I'm talking about a vibrant worship experience.

I want to disrupt the Church of Christ down the street in the middle of their — they're close enough, amen. I'm talking about a vibrant worship. I tell you what, you ought to just give the Lord a shout right where you are right now. Bless the Lord. Talking about a vibrant worship experience. So here's five vibrant worship postures that impact the atmosphere. This is what we're going to be about here. This is what worship's going to feel like. If you say, "Well, it didn't feel like that today," it's going to feel like it next week.

Amen. I'm going to put a button over there on that computer that replays this whole message every time we have dead, dried up worship. Amen. Number one, the first of the five vibrant postures is to sing. To sing.

> **PSALM 100:2** ESV
>
> 2 Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

Psalm 100:2 says, "Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into His presence with singing." Why do we sing? Because it's a godly thing to do. Why do we sing? Because God said to sing. Why do we sing? Because the psalmist said, "You people ought to sing." We sing because the Bible says — somebody say, "The Bible says so." The Bible says so.

The Bible says so. So that's why we sing. "Well, I don't get what all that singing is about." I had a lady when I got here, I don't know where, I blocked her on Facebook. But she'd get on our Facebook all the time for the church. I hope you're watching right now too. She'd get on there all the time and go, "I don't like that church, they sing too many songs." And every comment — she'd comment, like, several times a week. Makala probably saw these too. She'd comment, "It's not American Idol." Well, my God. I don't sing 'cause it's American Idol.

I sing because the Bible says so. Amen. That's why I sing, 'cause the Bible says so. But guess what? Singing is also discipleship. It's discipleship. Listen to this.

> **COLOSSIANS 3:16** ESV
>
> 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Colossians chapter 3 says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." There is something about singing songs that gets the Word down in you. Now, I will tell you, if I've got one thing where I'm a little, like, frustrated with modern church music, okay? Which we sing, and we do, and we're not going to stop.

But some of these songs just don't get the Word down in you quite like... And I'm not talking about having to sing hymns. Man, we used to just sing little songs like — we used to do — I wasn't planning on this, by the way, so y'all get ready. So we used to sing, [worship] That's not a good key. Amen. [worship] — this is a little old worship — [worship] Y'all, does anybody remember that song?

> **PHILIPPIANS 1:6** ESV
>
> 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Amen. Y'all give the Lord a praise right there on that last chord. Yeah, go ahead. We sing little songs like that, and what would happen is you'd get these little things down on the inside of you. Now all hell is breaking loose, but you might not know where it's at in the Bible, but we've done bashed it into your skull here in the church and got you where you're walking around going, all hell's breaking loose, but He who began a good work in you. And you have that in your spirit.

It's discipleship. When we sing these songs, you know, and even some of the new songs. Some of y'all are going through stuff and you're going, "I don't know. I feel like I might be about to lose my job. My industry's changing." [worship] Well, you know, Hebrews 12 says that you've inherited a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

> **HEBREWS 12:28** ESV
>
> 28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,

Hallelujah. So now you know. So it's discipleship. It gets down on the inside of you. I'm telling you, I'm about ready to run a hole through the wall this morning.

Amen. The second one, the second one is to clap. We clap. We clap. You know why we clap at the end of songs? We clap at the end of songs to give those of you who can't clap on the right beat a chance. Amen. I hear y'all, a little rain going through the room every, you know. And so we clap. Why do we clap? Because the Bible says so. The Bible says so, so we clap. This is a way that we make noise. Sometimes you just need to get into the presence of your enemies and just... Some of y'all have got stuff going on, and the reason you can't get over it is 'cause you just haven't learned how to praise. And my God, if you can't praise in here around a bunch of people who are on the same page with you, how are you going to praise when you're dealing with that devil at work?

How are you going to — if you can't praise in here, how do you praise in the face of a $800 Alabama Power bill? I mean, my God, at some point we're just going to have to choose to be hot around here. Amen. This ain't no joke down here. Amen. It's a different kind of hot in Mobile. I want everybody to know it's a different kind of hot.

> **PSALM 47:1** ESV
>
> To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. [1] Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!

But the Bible says in Psalm 47, it says, "Clap your hands, all peoples. Shout to God with loud songs of joy. Shout unto God," I like this, "with a voice of triumph." But we clap, we clap, we celebrate. Why?

'Cause this is a Holy Ghost party. We ain't going to have no dead, dry church around here. And I'm going to tell you, even in the Spirit-filled church down here, what I've seen... 'Cause I know what everybody's doing down here, by the way. I'm watching. I want to know what I'm in down here. And I watch people in these churches, and we've got some... And I'm talking about in the Pentecostal church, considering that we've got 19 of them at every exit. We've got some of the deadest worship down here in this region. I'm watching Pentecostal people who don't clap, don't sing, don't... We used to get it and just dance.

I mean, we used to just have a good time. I mean, we had a standard issue dance in the Pentecostal church 30 years ago. Just everybody just kind of did this. And he said, "I could sing unending songs." I mean, we would just sing those old songs. Well, look what the Lord has done. And we came into church, and we danced. And down here, we got a bunch of statues that don't sing. They don't clap. You gotta do something. You gotta get something going on in church. And I'm not just talking about us, but if you think that we are past it, we aren't.

No. Our church is... Man, what if we were just the church? "Well, I don't know. Them people seem happy and excited over there." Why? Because they're happy and excited? No, the preacher got up one Sunday and told them just to act like they are when they show up. And it'll change things. 'Cause it will. 'Cause it's a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness. You gotta put it on.

Number three, you lift your hands. Let me just see some people just give your shoulder an exercise today. Just lift your hands in the house of the Lord. Yeah, we lift our hands. Well, they used to say you lift your hands 'cause you surrender to the Lord. And I think that's fine. I think it's good to turn it over to the Lord. But you know, we lift our hands 'cause the Bible says so. This is not hard, guys, where I'm going with this. The Bible said so. We lift our hands to heaven and we magnify Him. Why? Because He's great and He's greatly to be praised. We don't just do it because — we don't wait until that moment. Why do we lift? We lift our hands 'cause He's worthy.

He's awesome. He's worth the glory. He's worth being a little weird and a little different in a Pentecostal church. My God. Used to sing a song, [worship] Psalm 33 says — I'm sorry, Lamentations chapter 3 says, "Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven." When you lift your hands to heaven, it's 'cause if you lifted your heart, you'd die.

> **LAMENTATIONS 3:41** ESV
>
> [41] Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:

You can't pull that out. So you just lift your hands and you say, "Thank you, Lord, that my heart is still where it is. Amen."

And so you lift your hands to heaven. We worship Him. We magnify. I'm going to tell you right now, folks, that movement right there, I want you to sing, I want you to clap. I'm going to tell you, this right here might be the

breakthrough for some of you. And you think, “That is so dumb. How is that a breakthrough?” Well, you’re the one that’s still stuck. You can go around talking about it’s dumb all you want to. I’m talking about — there’s something about this, this engages your faith. This is, some of y’all, this is the biggest step you’re going to take in your Pentecostal journey.

Some of you are like, “I just want to get the baptism of the Holy Ghost.” Listen, it’s a whole lot weirder than this. So you need some warmup to the Spirit-filled life. You just need to say, “Well, Lord, I just need you to... We worship you, Lord. We magnify...” I mean, I’m just doing it to talk, and I just feel, just having my hands up, I just feel the Holy Ghost. I mean, just the presence of the Lord. This pleases the Lord. This honors the Lord, this posture. It’s a posture of worship.

Number four, number four, we shout. This is going to be a shouting church. This is going to be a shouting church, and let me tell you why. Because when we shout, stuff happens. I cannot explain it. I cannot totally wrap my brain around it, but what I have found is in atmospheres where a shout is released, there is a release. It breaks something open. I don’t know what it is. And I want y’all to hear this. I want to say something to y’all, and I’m not trying to be ugly at all when I say this, but I want you to hear me. And I think it’s actually my fault. I don’t think it’s you. I think it’s more on me.

I was a worship leader for a long time. I have a great favor with taking unresponsive churches and turning them into an almost revival-pitched atmosphere. Just — I have a gift for it. I don’t know what it is. It’s an anointing. I have had less results here than I’ve had anywhere I’ve ever been. So this is why I’m teaching this, ‘cause y’all have gotta — I need y’all to make some choices. We’re going to put it on. We’re going to do this. We’re going to make this happen. This is why I’m going to teach. I figure if I can’t demonstrate it, we’ll just teach it.

But when I say shout, I’m not saying go, “Yeah.” There are seven words for praise in the Hebrew, and one of them is a word, shabach. It’s my favorite one, and the rendering of the word literally means to keep it in. Like, don’t let up. You just kind of hang on to it till something happens. And I’m telling you, there’s something about a Pentecostal Spirit-filled church with a shabach praise, that when you just let that shout out, and you just shout until — frankly, I’m ready for you to stop, amen. And just, if we’d just be a shouting church, I mean, there’s just something that’s going to happen in the room if we get there.

And I need you to hear me. I’m not trying to be ugly to every other church. And if I wanted to be ugly, I’d call them by name. I’m not trying to be ugly. But folks, I’m talking about some general diagnosis here across the board. The Pentecostal church has lost its shout. We’ve lost its involvement. We’ve lost its vibrancy. And I’m telling you, that’s really a big deal down here. And I get that we’re trying to make everybody comfortable, but I’m telling you, when people come into a church like ours, they don’t come because they think, “I’ll just check it out.”

Generally, when people find themselves in a Spirit-filled church, it’s because nothing else works. “So I gotta go somewhere where they’ve got power. I don’t need another Sunday school lesson. I don’t need another three points and a poem. I need something that I can’t get anywhere else.” Well, folks, right now our worship looks a little like it looks anywhere else. You can get it in five to six other churches in the area, other than the singing’s better than everybody else. Amen. I’m going to get some of these in. Hallelujah. But when people come in here, they need to kind of be like, “What in the world?”

People need to have moments in a worship service in a church like ours where they go, “I can’t hear the music. It’s just — they’re kind of crazy. But they all seem happy.” Amen. So what I’m going to do is I’m going to count to three, and I want you to shout. Darla Stevens just shut the door real soft to not disturb anybody, because y’all ain’t caught the Holy Ghost yet, amen. I’m just messing around. Here we go. One, two, three, come on, give the Lord a good shout in the holler. No, see, now hold on, hold on. That’s what happens.

I can get a good three seconds out of you and then the decibels go boop. That's not a shabach praise. That's not a praise. That's a Shoshari praise. I'm talking about a shabach praise. I'm going to count to three. I want you to just get crazy in this church. I know some of y'all are like, "We invited friends today." I'm sorry. It's going to be like this more often than it's not going to be moving forward. Amen. One, two, three, come on, give the Lord a shout in the — what's his name? Jesus. Hallelujah. Come on, give him another praise. Amen.

It's a shout. The fifth one, the fifth one, the fifth response in worship of creating a vibrant worship atmosphere is to preach back. To preach back, to preach back, to preach back.

> **NEHEMIAH 8:5-6** ESV
>
> 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it
> all the people stood. 6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen,"
> lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

The Bible says in Nehemiah about Ezra, it says, "And Ezra opened the book. He opened the book. He opened the book in the sight of the people, for he was above all the people, and he opened, and all the people stood." He said, "He opened the book, and they stood. He opened the book, and they..." Okay, this section doesn't know how to do it.

Okay. "He opened the book, and they stood." They stood. Hey, hey, hey — let me check right over here. "He opened the book, and they stood." And yeah, they stood. They stood. Amen. Now, hallelujah. They responded. They got involved. "And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, 'Amen, Amen.'" And he probably got a comment: "That's good, Ezra." You gotta — when there's good preaching, you gotta say, "Amen." And when there's confused preaching, you gotta say, "Amen," and — you gotta have some, you gotta, I'm telling you, there's something about that participation.

Now let me say this. Now, there is — I do need us always to remember that the message is written. It's done. I don't need you to write the sermon. I've had people since I've been here, a couple of them, that I'd get to preaching and then they'd go, "Yeah, what about this?" It's done. I don't need any — this isn't, there's no comment section. Only like buttons, amen. Press the amen button. Hallelujah. Amen. You can put them on, we got amens? "Come on, preach it, white boy." Amen. You got a couple of things in there you can press.

Hallelujah. Whatever you got, but I'm talking about having an amen. When I'm preaching — and I've been told that sometimes I can preach a little up here, and sometimes people kind of be trying to follow with me, and that's a good time to say amen. Sometimes when there's preaching, you go, "I don't know if I receive that, but I receive whatever's in the atmosphere." Talking about a vibrant atmosphere. You gotta receive. My God, I'm having a good time today, amen. Hallelujah.

And I'm telling you, when you do this stuff, you may think, "Why do you want us to do all that?" And some of y'all are probably thinking, "You just want to feel good when you're preaching." Yeah, I want to feel good when I'm preaching. I do. But no. Why are we talking about this? Because a vibrant atmosphere, it matters. It affects other people. It's easy for everybody to sit there in the message when there's preaching. Ms. Lisa, I'm going to come sit by you. They can sit there in the preaching and just be dozing off and, oh, whatever, and okay, he's about to wrap up. Where we going to eat after church? Where we going to go? And you can be there. But when Lisa's sitting here going, "Now that's good preaching, brother. Amen" — that'll wake you up.

I'm screaming today, Greg. I don't have a problem with it. Hallelujah. I'm talking about it's a — it creates a vibrant atmosphere. It breaks something in the room. But on top of that, it's an offering to God. It's an offering to the Lord. You come in here and you get participating. Some of you serve, and some of you give, but everybody in here can give God an offering of some type of sacrifice of praise.

And you say, "Well, I don't feel comfortable with that." That's what makes it a sacrifice of praise.

> **HEBREWS 13:15** ESV
>
> 15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.

It's stepping out of what you feel comfortable with and saying, "God, I just give it to you. I'll just go for it today. I'm just going to be involved. I'm going to do something." And then it benefits you, too. Because something starts happening in the room, and it positions you. And my preacher growing up, he used to say, "You gotta get under the spout where the glory comes out." And there's something about when you start to participate in the service and you contribute to the atmosphere, it positions you to receive.

And I want to talk to you about that. Vibrant worship, number three, it creates a physical predisposition. A physical predisposition. I've gotten my whole week's worth of steps in today, 'cause it's a vibrant atmosphere. Whoo. It's a vibrant worship experience. Hallelujah. That was a great place to amen. And y'all, it's like just the last point just — if I'm pulling amens out of y'all from this point on, it's disobedience to the Lord at this point. Amen. I can't make it no clearer. Amen. Hallelujah. Participation in vibrant worship predisposes you for blessing.

Now, I want to tell you a story, and I want you to follow me 'cause I gotta tell it in multiple parts. When I got saved, I was young, which helps, but I was 12. I wasn't raised in church. I'd been to church. It wasn't like I didn't know what church was. I was aware of what was going on, but we weren't raised in church. And I went to this Bible study, got saved, and God did a great work in my life. Well, here I am now, you know? And so I go to this Bible study. Well, it wasn't a couple of weeks, 'cause going back every week, and in a couple of weeks, you know, the guy's leading worship and stuff on an acoustic guitar singing "Lord, I Lift Your Name On High" every week.

Keeping it in the rotation, you know? And they would — the people were lifting their hands. And I just, a few weeks in, I just thought, "I gotta get in on this, I guess." And so I would start lifting my hands, and I'd start worshiping the Lord. Well, by the time I was in church regularly, I would just participate. I took to it very quickly. I just took to participating in worship. So I would go down to the front. We had a lot of people go down to the front in worship. And I would always go down in front of these steps right here, right where the little preacher island.

That's what this is. That's the theological term, preacher island. Amen. And right where that ended and the stairs were, and I would stand, and the worship leader was right here. And we'd stand here. And we didn't have countdowns back in the day. They played the same song on CD every Sunday, and that's how we knew. We'd hear the little bongos, doo, doo-doo, doo-doo, went, "It's time to worship." Amen. And so didn't have no countdown videos. And so we'd go down, and I would just participate, and I would worship the Lord right here.

And right after I got saved, though, I started playing the bass. And interesting dynamic at my home church: no opportunity. Some of y'all have been upset at churches and pastors because you haven't had any opportunity to do something you feel like you want to do. I want you to know, sometimes that can be the best training ground for you.

God'll do something in those moments. But so I would be playing, and I was playing, you know, at home, and I'm learning, and I'm playing. And honestly, opportunities started opening for me outside of the church.

What's crazy is I was, like, 13 years old, and I was going — there was a guy in our church. This is where I met Barry. A guy in our church would drive me over to Atlanta to play bass at a church in Atlanta. They won't let me play. I'm right here. And they're not letting me play. And so no opportunity in my home church, so it kept me in this where I was just in worship. I was just in this moment, not up here, okay? And I'm going to talk to you about that in a minute too. So I'm learning to play bass and I'm down here. Well, I start traveling a little bit.

Guys are giving me opportunities while I'm in high school and I'm going around and I'm playing. And just so y'all know, I'm a bass player. And before I'm anything else, I'm a bass player. Everything I have in my life can be traced back to this instrument right here. And so I was a bass player and I was pretty good, and so I was getting attention. And, you know, a bass player's job is real simple, okay? A bass player's job is to stand up there and not have any fun. But that's playing bass right there, you know? And you can play as funky as you want. Maybe a little groove or something, right?

And so I was playing bass, I was trying to get better, and I used to watch this guy, talked about him a few months ago, named Victor Wooten. I would watch this. He's the greatest bass player that's ever lived, ever will live, ever has been, ever going to be. In fact, Barry told me — I was telling him about this illustration today, and he said that y'all wouldn't know who Victor Wooten was unless I told you he's the guy who plays the Amazing Grace solo on the bass. You may have seen it float around the internet. If you've ever seen it, he goes — I can't do all of it.

I can do a little bit of it, but it's kind of like — let's see if I can get you a little. And so Victor Wooten, super funky bass player. So there's a couple of techniques when you play. So you have, you know, finger style is what people call it. You can play finger style. But then you can also slap and pop, okay? This is for the people who like to have fun. Slap and pop. So I was pretty good at those things as a kid. So we would play songs like, [worship]

You know, so we would do little funky stuff like that. So Victor Wooten had a technique though that was called a double thump technique. I couldn't do it. I could do a lot of stuff, I couldn't do it. Double thump technique's where you go through the string and you come back up, and it gives you double the motion for one slap. So rather than you get — that's what I could do. This is Victor Wooten. See, it's even hard now. Okay? That's the double thump. Well, I couldn't get it, and I never could get it. 2003, October, I've been playing five or six years.

And by the way, this is a prophetic overlay that you don't get in most people's lives, but the Lord's gracious to preachers sometimes. October 2003, I go to Victor Wooten's concert in Birmingham, Alabama, where I also meet Beyoncé's bass player on the streets of Birmingham. If you were wondering how good he is. Let me tell you how good Victor Wooten is. Victor Wooten did a video recently giving a tour to a magazine of all his basses and all his equipment, and he says, "Now, I don't have my main bass here. It's in a museum right now."

You got anything in a museum, amen? That's how good of a bass player this guy is. And so I couldn't get this double thump thing. And I come down to the stage at the concert, we get there early, and I just want to see all of his stuff. I want to see all of his gear. If you do this stuff, you at least go through a phase where you're into the gear. And so I go down and I'm looking at all of his stuff, and I guess when I did it, it was like a clarion call to the room. I was just looking at his stuff. And I turn around to go sit down, and I'm surrounded by hundreds of people.

And there is no escaping where I have walked to. And I'd walked up right there where I worshiped every Sunday. I'd walked right there. And so I'm standing down there and the concert starts. I can't go anywhere, and Victor Wooten

walks out and he starts doing his thing, right? And so I'm standing there watching, without ever touching the instrument again, the double thump is unlocked. Amen. And now I can go out. It came to me standing there, okay? It happened while I was standing there. Now all of a sudden, I can't just go out and do a groove. I can do this double thump technique. It happened in that moment.

Now, you may think, "I could care less about this." I get it. Okay. So let me explain what happened. I wanted something I couldn't attain to. I wanted something I couldn't get. I wanted this double thump technique. For some of you, you go, "It's just playing the bass." No, no, it opened every door in my life. So for you, it might be like welding or like learning how to do calculus, or whatever unlocks something in your life. This unlocked something in my life.

All of my — I'm married to my wife because I'm a bass player. 'Cause I got the job at her church because I had played for a bunch of artists that I threw on my resume and made me look better than I was to the guy who hired me. Amen. "Preach, white boy," she just said. So it all comes from there. It comes from there, okay? But what would happen is I would come down in church. They would give me no opportunity in church, but I'd come down in church, and I'd worship right here. And then I found myself at a Victor Wooten concert wondering what the gear looked like.

And I was so used to coming to this area that I was physically predisposed for blessing. And I get down here, and not only do I get down here, I get trapped. Y'all don't know me real well, but I don't like to be around a bunch of people in the first place, so I was genuinely trapped. I wanted to go sit down. I'd be fine watching Victor Wooten from 100 feet away, amen. But I'm down here, and I'm stuck. And something about him standing there playing, and all of a sudden, without ever touching the instrument again, this technique is released — it is unlocked. I receive a blessing.

I receive. Why? Because I was physically predisposed. And the Holy Spirit allowed it to happen in this way so I could show you that in the same position where I worshiped in the church was the same position where I received the blessing, and it was unlocked in my life. Talking about being physically predisposed to blessing. Hallelujah. What I'm telling you is when you participate in vibrant worship in a church, you are positioned, you are predisposed to receive from the Lord. Amen. Jeremy, I'm going to ask you to come play for me. I want to talk to you about another time in my life before we close this morning, because we have to not only be, we have to become a church of vibrant worship.

The atmosphere has improved — we have got to go further. We've gotta go further with our worship in this church. We've gotta reach further than we've been. We've gotta take it to the next level, where we're not asking and pulling. And this morning I'm leading worship, I just want to be honest with you. I'm over here and I feel torn, because I gotta clap for y'all, I gotta sing the whole song for y'all, I gotta... But I gotta play, and I'm physically torn because I'm trying to push the atmosphere. I got no push.

I can't get it. All I can do is teach this. And so what we've gotta do is we've just gotta make a decision. Vibrant worship. And I'm not kidding, I'm hitting my microphone, I'm biting my tongue, I'm losing my voice. You know, it just, there's only so much we can do. Amen? And so we need you to participate. We need you to get involved. We have to become this kind of church. Why? Because this is the kind of church that's going to make a difference in this area.

This is an area where you can go get the normal experience everywhere. I just want to tell you, there's not a lot of difference anymore between the worship in a Baptist church, a non-denominational church, and a Spirit-filled church. Everything's just normalized right there in the middle. I'm talking about having a church where people come in and something is going on. Something is happening. I know some of you when I talk like this, you're going, "That's awesome. I want to see it happen. I don't want to be a part of it particularly, but I'm just not comfortable with that, preacher. I don't want..."

And I'm talking specifically to a lot of the men in the room this morning. And you know, we've got a high value in the Evangelical church right now on being a man. Be a man and worship. Be a man and show up. I am not unsympathetic to that. So several years ago, about 10 years ago, 10, 15 years, or 10, 12 years ago, I stopped leading worship. So I had transitioned to where I'd really been stuck here, and then I got where I was playing bass, and then playing bass led to playing keys, and playing keys led to leading worship.

And for the next 10, 12 years, I lived my life here. I lived my life worshiping kind of from this position, where it's leading the band, and it's singing, and it's doing all this. And every church worship experience I had was glued to this, 'cause I was the guy. I mean, worship guys aren't coming out anybody's ears. Right? So I mean, if you do it, you're going to be doing it all the time. And so I was living there. Well, when I stopped doing it, you know, and transitioned back down to the floor, part of this, I will be honest, was just I was done.

Like, this is work. So I stopped taking songs in. You know, there's about a 10-year gap where I just don't know any of the songs. And I'll hear people talk about songs by name, and I'll be like, "I've heard the title," and I just think, "I have no idea. I couldn't hum that. I don't know it." So part of it was that, but the other part of it was I got so comfortable with worship here. I got so comfortable living in this world and from this perspective, and so when I came back down and I was amongst the people, it just felt — this feels weird to me now.

You know? And one is 'cause I'm not used to being down here. I'm not used to being on this side. And the other part of it is I'm — I mean, I'm not quiet. So I'm like, "God, if I sing in church, I'm going to clear this section out." You know? And it's also work. So I would stand here, and I mean, I just critiqued everything I saw, 'cause I know — I mean, I know everything he's doing right now. Like I'm hyper aware. Anything he plays, I could go up there and play it right now. I'm aware of what it is.

He's on a six chord right now. So, you know, I can hear all that stuff. And so you stand here and you criticize, and I just was uncomfortable with it. A few, probably four or five years ago, I'd kind of been there for a while. Don't clap. Maybe at the end of songs. Don't clap. Don't sing. Don't lift hands. Don't participate at all. I was as dead and dry as some of y'all that are scared to get touched. Amen. Hallelujah. I was. I just had gotten to that place. And I don't know what it was. It was around a holiday. And for whatever reason, we had stuff for teenagers on Sunday morning, and Jocelyn was in the auditorium with us, which was not normal.

And Jocelyn was sitting next to me, and Ashleigh's sitting over here. And I don't know, man, I just kind of just thought, man, I want my kids to — I want them, what I really want them to experience is the power and the touch of God in their life. And I don't know how to do it. If I confess to you, I mean, I'm a preacher, and I pray, and I read the Bible, and I mean, there are days where I go, "Maybe I should just walk around the house screaming in tongues all the time." And I haven't done that, but I want the power of God to touch them.

And here's an opportunity. I got my daughter next to me, and I'm about to dead-dry worship my way through this service 'cause I don't love the songs, and I don't love the atmosphere, and I don't feel comfortable. And I just made a decision while she was sitting there, or standing there next to me, I just said, "I'm going to engage." And I started to lift my hands, I started to sing, and I started to... And my God, I'm going to tell you what: I started having ministry opportunities open up all of a sudden that I hadn't had in years. And I started getting called to do stuff and to be in places and do things, and God started to move in a powerful way.

My ministry fundraising shot through the roof. In one week, we raised all of our ministry budget for when I was traveling as an evangelist. In one week, in one week we had done it. And why? Because something happened. Something

happens when you give to that atmosphere. But I need you to understand, y'all, I feel the same thing you feel. I get it. You're standing out here, it feels a little uncomfortable. You're standing next to someone. What if they hear you sing? What if you raise your arms and you bump them?

Or you clap and you get a little off beat, and, you know, what's that going to be like? I don't know. Maybe you start to sing and they hear you, and something hits them and they start to weep because they just — you know, it's one thing for me to sing, being all good-looking and sounding good, amen. But if you start to sing and you will worship the Lord, and you're not quite there, and all of a sudden it touches them and they go, "Oh my God, they're actually doing it." Maybe you lift your hands and you bump them, and the Holy Ghost touches them and something breaks out in the service.

Maybe you clap off beat and they go, "I can do that, too." Worship for you is an opportunity. Worship for the person standing next to you could potentially be life and death. People walk in here, and we can only get so much done in a Sunday. I'm going to tell you, people do not get saved at Sunday morning church — where people most often do get saved — but they do not get saved because we preach a good gospel preach... I mean, I haven't touched the gospel of Jesus Christ today. So when someone gets saved in an atmosphere like this, it's not because they've been convinced because the apologetics were so on point that they go, "Well, that's a great case for the risen Messiah being Jesus Christ. Christianity must be the truth." No, it's the anointing. It's the anointing. It's the atmosphere. Something happens.

So this is what I want to do. I don't think we have any... Can you sing a song? That's all right. We'll get you some platform shoes and we'll get you set up. Amen. I tell you what, all across the room, I want you to just stand to your feet. We're going to close the message out right here. I gave you five things you can do this morning. You can begin this morning, right now, and we're only going to — we're going to sing quick. We're not going to spend a lot of time here.

I've preached ad nauseam. What we're going to do is take a minute. Your response today is just, why don't you worship at the level you haven't gone to yet? If you're a hand lifter, be a hand lifter. If you're a singer, be a singer. When we get to the end, if you're a patty caker or a pocket guy, let's clap. If you've done all of it and you've never lifted your voice and shout, I'll give you — the best word you can shout in His presence is "yeah." Yeah. Just, we shout. So right now, Jeremy, I want you to begin to sing. And all across this room, worship the Lord.

No words, no nothing, just — [worship] Everybody stay standing. Right here, listen. This is it. You gotta hold this from here on out. Because the more I pull on you in a service, the more whoever leads worship pulls on you in a service, that's what makes a church weird. When you just do it, that's not weird. That's vibrant and responsive, and it gets out on people. And by the way, I don't like weird stuff. The five things I just gave you, that's the little bubble we're going to live in.

That's our little bubble. If I ever ask you to do something weird, you better do it, 'cause something's about to break out in the room. If y'all ever hear me talking about cartwheels and somersaults or anything, y'all better go, "I better hit me a somersault and I'm going to get blessed today." Amen. I don't do weird. I'm talking about being here, but I'm talking about living here and embracing it, and making that our own, and making that our place, and making that where we are. I'm not running off, not getting soft and pulling back and retreating.

I feel like Caleb. We're well able to take this mountain.

> **NUMBERS 13:30** ESV
>
> 30 But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.”

Amen. Amen. And have the most prominent and energetic and supernatural Pentecostal worship experience in the Mobile region. In Jesus’ name. Hallelujah.

02

Preaching Notes

Before You Preach

This message closes a three-week series called Here We Grow, framed as a church-wide staff meeting. In a staff meeting the pastor teaches, tells the team where we are going, and tells them what he needs from them. This is the third week: what I need from you. And the ask is not money or volunteers. It is vibrant worship.

Be clear early that this is not a message about worship in the full sense. How we live and how we give say more about who we worship than anything that happens on a Sunday. This is about the atmosphere of a church service, and every person's part in it.

The structure is three points that all start with "physical": presence, posture and predisposition. Point two carries most of the weight, with five postures: sing, clap, lift your hands, shout and preach back. Lead the congregation in each posture as you teach it.

Ezra 3 connects to last week's message: it is the scene where the returned exiles lay the foundation of the rebuilt temple, the house whose latter glory would be greater than the former.

Much of the color here comes from the preacher's own story as a bass player and worship leader. Substitute your own story of being positioned to receive.

Introduction

We are in a series called Here We Grow, and we have treated these weeks like one big staff meeting. Two weeks ago I taught you. Last week I told you where we are going. This week I am going to tell you what I need from you.

I could preach on giving. We need you to be generous, and remember: you never give to your pastor or the church. You give to the Lord, and that is how you release the blessing. But that is not this message.

I could preach on serving. We need you there too, especially in kids ministry. When we arrived, we did not know from week to week whether any children would come; we had plans for what to do if none showed up. Last week we had 35 kids. So over the next few weeks, every area of kids ministry except the nursery will be run by volunteers, and we will pay nursery workers. Parents of babies, especially first-time guests, need to know their little ones are in professional hands. (By the time they are four, it's "Sure, Charles Manson, here you go, they'll be fine for an hour.") And it frees our good nursery volunteers to serve in other kids areas. But that is not this message either.

Today I need you to give me vibrant worship.

I am not talking about worship proper. If I were, I would tell you that the way you live and the way you give reflect your worship more than anything we do on a Sunday. It doesn't matter if we sing two songs or 28 songs: the way

you live and the way you give tell us who you worship. Today I am talking about the atmosphere that happens when we come into the room together.

And let me acknowledge how far we have come. The atmosphere of this room has come a thousand light years since I got here. You used to stare at me for 45 minutes; that is why I preached so short at first. Our worship is lively now. But we have a long way to go. It is the week before Back to Church Sunday, and we are a few months away from a major pivot in our church. We have to take the next step together.

Put On the Garment of Praise

For years I was the worship guy, 10 to 12 years behind the keyboard. Funny enough, I rarely preach on it. But one passage has shaped how I see corporate worship. It is the anointing that was upon Jesus.

> ISAIAH 61:1-3 ESV
>
> 1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.

Look at verse 3. Every problem in this passage is internal: mourning, ashes, a faint spirit. And every solution is **something you put on**: a beautiful headdress, the oil of gladness, "the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit" (Isaiah 61:3).

Participation in worship is not going to come to you. People say, "I don't want to do it when the worship leader tells me. I want to do it when I feel it." **The feeling ain't coming.** You can't walk through hell six days a week, walk in here, sing a couple of songs and suddenly feel like magnifying the Lord. There is a reason we crucify the flesh: what we feel like doing often isn't what we ought to do. Nobody on this platform is good enough to inspire you into it. At some point you make a decision: "I'm going to participate." You put it on.

Illustration: the water balloon. We have been taught that worship is just you and the Lord during a few songs. But your participation is like a water balloon. When it hits, it splatters and touches everything around it. When you lift your hands and your voice, it affects the atmosphere in a way that can change people's lives. **Often God doesn't need your worship in the service as much as the people sitting in the room need it.** Some came in so heavy and defeated that they have nothing to give. They need your praise to jump over onto them.

And it benefits you, too. We will get there.

1. Vibrant Worship Requires Physical Presence

Showing up matters. As they say in business, you can't go up unless you show up.

> HEBREWS 10:24-25 ESV
>
> 24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Now is not the time to be away from church. Now is the time to show up. (Everyone I have known who said they didn't need church and could hear from the Lord on their own turned out a little weird and dysfunctional. I want to be like the people who show up.)

Illustration: the executive coach. Years ago an executive coach asked me a question I found annoying at first: "How do you show up?" Showing up is one thing. How you show up is another.

- Do you show up **ready to receive**?
- Do you show up **ready to respond**?

If the plan got thrown out, the glory of God fell and people were being healed and delivered and restored, would you be ready? Or would you walk in saying, "I liked it better the way it used to be," it's too hot, it's too cold, it's too bright, it's too dark?

In Luke 15, the prodigal son comes home and his father throws a party. His older brother comes in from the field, hears the music, and gets angry. "But he was angry and refused to go in" (Luke 15:28). There is plenty of conjecture about why, but here is one reason: he wasn't in the house. **Nobody is upset when they're in the house.** You have to get where the party's going on. (We used to say, "There ain't no party like a Holy Ghost party, 'cause a Holy Ghost party don't stop.")

Have you decided to show up ready to receive?

2. Vibrant Worship Revolves Around Physical Posture

This is the heart of the message. Lean in.

Every church expects some physical posture in worship. Catholics make the sign of the cross. Methodists walk to the front for communion. Baptists line up for the potluck. **We are an openly Spirit-filled church, and we ought to worship like one.** This is a church, not a seminar. We are going to be a church for people who like to have church.

No accessories included. Some toys come with all the accessories and some don't. We are a no-accessories-included worship experience: no tambourines, no shofars, no flags, no banners, no ribbons, no weapons. (A friend once led worship at a church where a man took a decorative sword off the communion table, worshiped with it,

then knelt before the senior pastor and held it up. The pastor knighted him.) Those things are not wrong in themselves. But they usually become a distraction that turns into a discussion, and there is a fine line between what we bring into worship and an idol. If you can't worship without your tambourine, that might be a problem.

But we will be an actively involved worshiping church. Ezra 3 shows what that looks like. The exiles have come home, and the foundation of the rebuilt temple is laid:

> **EZRA 3:11-13** ESV
>
> 11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love
> endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord,
> because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and
> heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the
> foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not
> distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted
> with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.

People came in with a spirit of heaviness, and there was a garment of praise. The sound of joy and the sound of weeping could not be told apart, and it was heard far away.

A preacher once told me that worship is vertical, between you and the Lord, and praise is horizontal: it lets everyone know that God is good. I want people driving down Shelton Beach Road to say, "What is happening in that church?"

FIVE VIBRANT WORSHIP POSTURES THAT IMPACT THE ATMOSPHERE

1. Sing.

> **PSALM 100:2** ESV
>
> 2 Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

Why do we sing? Because the Bible says so. Not because it's American Idol, as one online critic complained when we "sang too many songs." We sing because the Bible says so.

And **singing is discipleship.**

> **COLOSSIANS 3:16** ESV
>
> 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing
> psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

Singing gets the Word down inside you. We used to sing simple choruses like "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it." All hell could be breaking loose, and you might not know the reference, but you

had it in your spirit: “he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). Newer songs do it too. You may be about to lose your job, but you are singing that Christ is your firm foundation, and the Bible says we are “receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken” (Hebrews 12:28).

2. Clap.

> PSALM 47:1 ESV
>
> To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. [1] Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!

We clap because the Bible says so. It is a way we make noise and celebrate. If you can’t praise in here, among people who are on the same page with you, how will you praise when you face the devil at work, or an $800 Alabama Power bill?

Even in the Spirit-filled churches of our region, I see some of the deadest worship around: Pentecostal people who don’t clap, don’t sing, don’t dance. Thirty years ago we danced. Don’t think we’re past it. What if we were the church where the preacher got up one Sunday and told people to act like they’re glad to be there, and it changed everything? It’s a garment of praise. You have to put it on.

3. Lift your hands.

We lift our hands to surrender, and that is good. But we lift our hands because the Bible says so, and because He is worthy.

> LAMENTATIONS 3:41 ESV
>
> [41] Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:

This might be the breakthrough for some of you. It engages your faith. For some of you it is the biggest step you will take in your Pentecostal journey, and a warm-up to the Spirit-filled life. If you want the baptism in the Holy Spirit, that is a whole lot “weirder” than lifting your hands. This posture pleases the Lord.

4. Shout.

This is going to be a shouting church. When a shout is released, something breaks open. I can’t fully explain it, but I have seen it again and again.

Be honest about the room: I have a gift for turning unresponsive churches into an almost revival-pitched atmosphere, and I have had less result here than anywhere I have been. That may be on me as much as you. So if I can’t demonstrate it, I’ll teach it.

One of the Hebrew words for praise is *shabach*, to praise, laud or commend God. It is often taught as loud, unrestrained praise. I’m not asking for a polite “yeah.” I’m asking for a shout you keep going until something happens.

The Pentecostal church has lost its shout. We have lost our involvement and our vibrancy. People usually find their way to a Spirit-filled church because nothing else worked. They don't need another Sunday school lesson or three points and a poem. They need something they can't get anywhere else. People should walk in and say, "They're kind of crazy, but they all seem happy."

Lead the church in a shout on a count of three. Then do it again, longer.

From the original notes: "Shout for joy in the LORD, O you righteous!" (Psalm 33:1)

5. Preach back.

> NEHEMIAH 8:5-6 ESV
>
> 5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. 6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Ezra opened the book, and the people stood. He blessed the Lord, and they answered, "Amen, Amen." They responded. When there's good preaching, say amen. When the preaching gets confusing, say amen anyway, and receive whatever is in the atmosphere.

One caution: the message is already written. There's no comment section, only like buttons. Press the amen button.

WHY ALL THIS MATTERS

Some of you think, "You just want to feel good when you're preaching." Yes. But that's not why. A vibrant atmosphere affects other people. It is easy to doze through a sermon until the person beside you says, "Now that's good preaching." It breaks something in the room.

It is also **an offering to God.** Some of you serve, some of you give, but everybody can bring "a sacrifice of praise to God" (Hebrews 13:15). "I don't feel comfortable with that." That is what makes it a sacrifice.

And it benefits you. My preacher growing up used to say, "You've got to get under the spout where the glory comes out." When you participate and contribute to the atmosphere, it positions you to receive.

3. Vibrant Worship Creates a Physical Predisposition

Participation in vibrant worship predisposes you for blessing.

Illustration: the bass player. (Tell it in parts.)

- I got saved at 12 at a Bible study. I was not raised in church. Within a few weeks of watching people lift their hands, I thought, "I'd better get in on this." Once I was in church regularly, I went down front to worship every

Sunday and stood in the same spot, where the platform ended at the steps. Every worship instruction given has a prophetic undertone.

- Right after I got saved I started playing bass. My home church gave me no opportunity to play, so on Sundays I stayed down front in worship. Meanwhile, doors opened outside the church. (Sometimes a season of no opportunity is your best training ground.)
- My hero was Victor Wooten, the bassist many know from his "Amazing Grace" solo. He had a technique called the double thump. I could do a lot on the bass, but I could never get that.
- In October 2003, five or six years into playing, I went to his concert in Birmingham. I went down front early to look at his gear, turned around, and was trapped by hundreds of people. I was standing right where I always stood to worship. He walked out, started playing, and without my touching the instrument again, the double thump was unlocked.
- That technique opened every door in my life. I even met my wife because of the bass: it got me the job at her church.

I wanted something I couldn't attain. I was so used to standing in that place that I was physically predisposed for blessing. The same position where I worshiped was the position where I received. **When you participate in vibrant worship, you are positioned, predisposed, to receive from the Lord.**

Conclusion: Becoming a Church of Vibrant Worship

(Have the keyboard player come up.)

The atmosphere has improved, but we have to go further. Leading from the platform, I feel torn: trying to play, sing, clap for you and push the atmosphere all at once. All I can do is teach it. We have to decide to become this kind of church, because this is the kind of church that will make a difference in our area. In many places there is little difference anymore between the worship in a Baptist church, a non-denominational church and a Spirit-filled church.

I am not unsympathetic, especially to the men. I was a worship leader for years. When I stepped back down to the floor, I got comfortable not participating. I critiqued everything, didn't sing, didn't lift my hands. I was as dead and dry as anyone. Then one Sunday around a holiday, my daughter Jocelyn was in the service beside me. I wanted my kids to experience the power and touch of God, and I was about to dead-dry worship my way through the service. So I decided, "I'm going to engage." I lifted my hands and sang. Ministry doors began opening that hadn't opened in years. In one week we raised our whole ministry budget for my travel as an evangelist. Something happens when you give to that atmosphere.

I know it feels uncomfortable. What if they hear you sing? What if you bump someone when you lift your hands? What if you clap off beat? But maybe the person next to you hears you, and it touches them, and something breaks out. **Worship for you is an opportunity. Worship for the person standing next to you could be life and death.** People are rarely saved because the apologetics were airtight. They are saved because of the anointing, the atmosphere.

Response: have everyone stand. Worship at the level you haven't gone to yet. If you're a hand lifter, lift your hands. If you're a singer, sing. If you've never shouted, shout. Then hold it from here on out. The more a worship leader has to pull on a room, the weirder it gets. When you just do it, that's not weird; it is vibrant and responsive.

I don't do weird. These five postures are the bubble we will live in. But if I ever ask you to do something unusual, do it, because something is about to break out.

I feel like Caleb: "we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). Let's be the most energetic, supernatural Pentecostal worship experience in the Mobile region.

03

Scripture List

Every passage read, cited or alluded to in the message, in the order it comes up.

Read

Read aloud in the message.

ISAIAH 61:1-3	1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; 2 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.
HEBREWS 10:24-25	24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
EZRA 3:11-13	11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the Lord, "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel." And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. 12 But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses, old men who had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice when they saw the foundation of this house being laid, though many shouted aloud for joy, 13 so that the people could not distinguish the sound of the joyful shout from the sound of the people's weeping, for the people shouted with a great shout, and the sound was heard far away.
NEHEMIAH 8:5-6	5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people, and as he opened it all the people stood. 6 And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.

Cited

Named or quoted along the way.

LUKE 15:11-32

11 And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said
to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he
divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son
gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered
his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine
arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out
to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And
he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him
anything. 17 “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired
servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise
and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and
before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your
hired servants.”’ 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long
way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and
kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and
before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 But the father said to his
servants, ‘Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand,
and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and
celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.’
And they began to celebrate. 25 “Now his older son was in the field, and as he came
and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the
servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, ‘Your brother has
come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back
safe and sound.’ 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and
entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, ‘Look, these many years I have served
you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that
I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has
devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!’ 31 And
he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was
fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was
lost, and is found.’”

PSALM 100:2

2 Serve the Lord with gladness! Come into his presence with singing!

COLOSSIANS 3:16	16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
HEBREWS 12:28	28 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe,
PSALM 47:1	To the choirmaster. A Psalm of the Sons of Korah. 1 Clap your hands, all peoples! Shout to God with loud songs of joy!
LAMENTATIONS 3:41	41 Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:

Alluded to

Drawn on without naming the reference.

PHILIPPIANS 1:6	6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.
HEBREWS 13:15	15 Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.
NUMBERS 13:30	30 But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, “Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it.”

Pastor Jason Mayfield

SENIOR PASTOR, CITYLIGHT CHURCH

Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, where he and his wife, Ashleigh, lead a church devoted to Building Lives on Jesus. His preaching is rooted in the Bible, full of hope, and grounded in one conviction: an incredible life is built on the finished work of Jesus Christ.

For more than 20 years, Pastor Jason has given his life to the local church. He has been credentialed with the Assemblies of God for 21 years and ordained for 14, and he has led revitalization in churches that went on to rank among the Top 100 Fastest-Growing Churches in America. He carries a deep conviction that the church can be both excellent and supernatural, and a passion for revival.

He is an author and the creator of Tear Up Your Bible and POWER 27, a daily rhythm of Bible reading, prayer and worship. His resources have helped more than 100,000 people go deeper in the Scriptures. Above every title, his greatest joy is seeing people meet Jesus, be filled with the Spirit, and grow into everything God has called them to be.

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