



# Letters To My Friends

Jay Winfrey



Letter 04:  
Life As Worship

Dear Friends,

This letter is not at all what I thought it was going to be. When I started writing it almost a year ago now, I had something very different in mind. My plan was to write about all the things that happen when we sing together. And, I wrote that letter... a couple times. But, during a sleepless night here and a drive to work there, the Holy Spirit began to form something very different. I hope that these paragraphs bring a breakthrough for each of you in the same way they did for me.

Before we launch into the rest of this letter, I want to encourage each of you to say, "Thank you" to Sarah and Steve. They handle some problematic and frustrating tasks to serve us every week. Steve is always thinking about our sound system. I mean ALWAYS. If the worship team is playing and you have the

thought, "The music sounds good and full today," you have had that thought because of Steve. Each time the words appear before you as we sing, you have experienced Sarah's service to you. These two have more impact on the practical parts of our singing praise to God than anyone else on the team. They sit behind us, clicking, turning, pushing, pulling on electronic equipment in service to God and to us. Take a moment on your way home from church and say, "Thank you, I am blessed by all you do."

### **Get Your House In Order**

God is calling our body into a new season with Him. I believe it will be filled with new power and a new revelation of His glory. There will be an increase of anointing upon the spiritual gifts we all carry. But I can tell you from recent personal experience, these things will not begin to happen until we place the first things in order. Over this year, my eyes have focused on the clock at 12:34 (noon and midnight) multiple times a week. It happened so often that I began to persistently ask the Lord, "Why are You showing me 12:34?" This fall, it has only intensified. Rosie and I were watching a car review show that we enjoy, and the reviewer pointed to the car's clock. Yep. You guessed it, 12:34. During November, God has redoubled His efforts. I am now seeing the clock at 1:23, 2:34, 3:45, and 4:56; at least one of these once a day. I believe God is telling me, "Get your steps in order." This has been a message to me to get and to keep the first things first. Specifically, the first things of the heart and the home.

There is a season in the Spirit that is closing. As it

closes, another one opens. Seven years ago, I stood before you and stated I wanted to be the worship pastor of our church. I did so because God gave me a vision. In the vision, I saw myself leading the church in praise. As we were singing continued, we walked from the sanctuary and marched down E. 7th St. worshipping God. Over the years, He has unpacked that vision in different ways, each time bringing a new understanding of its meaning. Now He is revealing that the ultimate destination of our march was our own homes. He desires that we establish the praise we sing in our gatherings as a regular event in the life of our families.

I believe the establishment of this worship time to be one of the first things He is making so crucial in this season. For Carrie and me, the sweetest times we share with our girls are the moments we spend praising God together. Carrie and I hide none of our worship to God from our girls in these moments. We have both laid on our faces, fallen to our knees, shouted, danced, raised our hands in their presence. As the worship songs stream on the television, they dance and twirl and sing along. It is easily the best part of any day. The reason I share this is that when this practice began in our home, a new intensity of Holy Spirit power began to show up during our worship together at church. God is teaching me what is first in our homes is the thing that will be first in His sanctuary. If something other than God is most important in our homes and hearts during the week, then that thing will still be first when we come into His house. But, when the worship of God is the first principle in our homes, we will come rejoicing into His gates with thanksgiving in our hearts! The corporate praise that

follows will bring down any stronghold. It might even bring down the walls of our church!

Making praise to God the first priority in our homes will also inspire us to worship all the time. That which is first in our house will overflow everywhere we go. We cannot become different people in various situations, even if we try. That which is highest in our most private place will be highest in public. Because we make worship our premiere priority at home, we will worship Him at work, at the doctor, at the store, and all the places in between. To me, this is very exciting!

My excitement rises from the fact that the most significant worship we can offer God is our obedience to His Spirit. I believe this with all my heart.

“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice - the kind He will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship Him.” (Rom. 12:1 NLT)

A song of praise, raised by the most beautiful voice, can never equal the measure of worship offered by a humble heart moving at the Spirit's behest. After all, the scripture tells us, “...to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at My word.” (Is. 66:2) God is looking for such people to walk with Him - to obey Him - to worship Him. A lively place of private worship with God will result in obedience to His Spirit in every part of our lives.

Worship through song and worship through obedience are profoundly linked. The one drives the other. When we worship God through music, we see that He is worthy of us yielding to His Spirit. When He moves through obedience, our hearts overflow with thanksgiving. The flowing of these two together will energize our families and fill our homes with joy. For those who live with their spouses and children, this joy will seep into the time spent cooking supper, cleaning bedrooms, and playtime. Children will see their parents loving God. Parents will hear their children singing praise songs as they color, or whatever your kids do. For those who are joined with the Holy Spirit only, His presence will be so thick that He becomes almost visible as you move through your home.

Then! When we all come together in His presence... What an explosion of praise it will be! Not one of us will stand before Him empty-handed. The raising of our arms toward heaven will lift the joy of the preceding week as an offering to Him. The freedom we find through obeying Him in the marketplace becomes the freedom to dance or shout. You see, our private life flows into our public life, and these together become the fuel for our corporate life. The flames of our corporate praise to God can only burn as hot as the fuel can produce. What does this mean? If we want to experience explosive corporate worship, then we must fan the embers of praise in our homes.

### **Worship is a Life**

I think we have all heard the phrase “worship is a lifestyle.” Many people, myself included, have used this

phrase when trying to explain and understand worship outside of musical expression. But, now God is wanting to draw us beyond this explanation. He is wanting us to see a distilled, more profound truth.

When Jesus was baptized, he “being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness.” (Luk. 4:1) Anything that Jesus may have carried into the water as a Jewish man fell away when he followed the Spirit into the wild. Walking into the desert, Jesus left behind his occupation, all possessions, and even his brothers, sisters, father, and mother. He died to all those things. You could say, the beginning of the crucifixion was in those hills. During those 40 days, Jesus did not learn or put on a lifestyle. He gave life. His life. The truth is, this is worship - crucifying one’s life to exalt God’s life.

Leviticus 2:13 “And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from the meat offering: with thine offerings, thou shalt offer salt.”

When we experience Jesus, our old man dies. We become an altogether new creation in Him. Though we have a tendency to see it as an analogy of metamorphosis, it is not so. Accepting Jesus means we embrace our death. In truth, we are not the same being after rebirth. Our old life crawls into a tomb, and the new man rises. The free will of our bondage to sin shed for something far superior, the will of God. This is our baptism in the Jordan. Then on the opposite bank, the Holy Dove descends to rest upon and within us. From this point, each step we take in obedience

to the Spirit is the life of Christ expressed through us. Jesus is the only acceptable offering to God. He is the meat on the sacrificial fire, and we are the salt. “You are the salt of the earth...” (Mat. 5:13).

When we obey God, what does He experience? He experiences His Son. He feels the heart of Jesus expressed. He sees Jesus’ face. He smells Jesus’s hair. And this is pleasing to the Father. How pleased was the Father with the life of His Son? Immensely! How satisfied is He when that life emerges from us? To an overwhelming degree! I don’t mean to humanize our sovereign God, but we need to understand that this relationship is deep and intense. We have all breathed in the fragrance of our children as we hold them - leaned down to feel their breath on our faces. Think of the pleasure that aroma and the wave of love it brings. When we obey our Father’s Spirit, this is His experience.

### **His Good Pleasure**

I really enjoy Bill Johnson’s teaching. A couple years ago maybe, I was listening to one of his sermons, and he shared a testimony that took root in my imagination. He told of a man who came from England to see if the miracles occurring at Bethel in Redding, CA were real. This man had a debilitating shoulder injury that was unrepairable. He lived in pain all the time. During worship that morning, someone spilled coffee down the back of his shirt. Angrily, he turned to see who it was. As he turned to see he realized there was no pain in his shoulder. The heat he had felt was not coffee, but the healing hand of God. His shoulder was healed during worship without the lay-

ing on of hands or any prayer for healing.

I realize that God had a purpose in this man's healing. He proved Himself to this man. The man's issue wasn't with Bethel, but with his own lack of faith. God destroyed that doubt with this healing miracle. But that isn't the part which fascinated me. The part that caught my attention was that it just happened. No big to-do made about it, just God being good in the midst of His people. What was he trying to teach me in this? Why did this particular miracle arrest my thoughts in such a profound way? His answer to these questions has become the passion that drives me every Sunday morning.

Every time we worship and sing praise to God together, my hope is that healing would spring up unannounced. Around the sanctuary, people's bodies being set free from disease, that tumors would dissolve, heart conditions healed, wheelchairs thrown to the side - I pray for these things often. As we sing, I am always yearning to hear the winds of deliverance blow over our house. People set free simply because they raised their voices in praise. I want the gifts of the Spirit to increase in all of us as we dwell in His presence. Prophecy, words of knowledge, and revelation flowing freely among us while His name is lifted high. And I believe these things are occurring and will increase!

God does all things from fullness and the overflow of His good pleasure. When we come into His house bearing the aroma of Jesus, arms filled with the fruits of obedience to His Spirit, He is well pleased. For us to enter His sanctuary in this way is ministry unto

Him. He will meet us in our brokenness and emptiness, but His desire is to receive the overflow of our joy in Him. We are not made to be empty. We are created to live full and to offer the overflow of His goodness as worship back to Him. In this atmosphere, God can pour out the overflow of His heart to accomplish His purposes through us in the week to follow. From the overflow of His good pleasure come the miracles we long see.

I don't want to imply a formula through which we can achieve the miracles of God. I don't subscribe to the notion that we can earn or coerce anything from Him. When He gives the fullness of Himself, He holds nothing back. From our first moments in Christ until we see Him face to face, the fullness of God is available to us through the Holy Spirit. What I do wholeheartedly believe in is a reciprocal relationship of multiplying overflow. As we worship Him in church, through time in the secret place, through singing together as families, His good pleasure flows within us. This flowing is our equipping, provision, revelation, and miracle for the days and weeks and months ahead. Then, when the time comes, when the Spirit leads, we pour out what we have received. To obey the Spirit fills us with joy. Receiving a word or work from God fills the recipient with joy. This multiplied joy is the overflow we offer back to Him as a ministry of worship to Him. In God's kingdom, all things are done above the full line.

This is the last thing because we are full we hunger. Herein is a beautiful paradox. The more time we spend worshipping and encountering God, the hungrier for Him we will become. When we cry out,

"I want more of you!" or "Come Holy Spirit, fill me anew!" it is not because we are empty. We cry out because we are full, and we want the overflow. It is a hunger He gives us. He is waiting and watching for those who desire the overflow so that He can flood them with it. "For the eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him." (2 Chr. 16:9) Our Father seeks to strengthen those who are already firm in Him. He gives hunger to those who are always full. Allow the Spirit to fill you daily, and He will cultivate an insatiable appetite for an ever-increasing overflow of His glory.

"God is a spirit, and those that worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth." (Jhn. 4:24) In truth, we say, "God has given all to me in fullness. I have His Spirit in me, and I provision for all He places before me." "But the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!'" (Rev. 22:17) By the same Spirit, which brings the fullness grows the hunger that yearns for His return - not just His return on that triumphant day, but in this one also.

Church, let us order or steps to place Him first in all things. May we burn with passion for worshiping Him always. Let us rest in the fullness He has given and press on for more of the overflow. I pray His good pleasure dwells upon you, and miracles follow where you go. Obey His Spirit, for it is your highest and best worship.

To my friends,  
JW