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PRAISE VS. PERFORMANCE

"But You are holy, O You Who dwell in the praises of Israel!" Psalm 22:3

When I was a kid, my big brother and I built a clubhouse. Okay, we didn't really "build" it, as we lacked the engineering skills and tenacity to do so. But the cozy cubby under the staircase made for an optimal location to hunker down and try to learn all the goofy passwords and codes of conduct my brother would conjure up for me to memorize. And though I never succeeded in that, it was a cool little place where we fit in and felt we belonged.



So we, as believers, need a "clubhouse" to hang with God. And of course, we already have one, as we are the living, breathing temple of the Holy Spirit, but the psalm above suggests a way to make it an especially cozy place for the Lord to abide: Praise!

If God truly does "dwell in the praises" of His people, then it truly is a necessity for us to praise Him. That's a good reason to have choirs, singing groups, praise teams, etc. in our church services. There's always some great musicians ready to *perform*...

Oops... hold it, stop! There's that word! The word that makes the hair on the back of my neck stand at attention: *PERFORM*. Performing has the connotation of bringing attention to ones self, not giving full glory and honor to God, the Giver of the talent, ability, and music itself. Many churches must grapple with this issue, as much of what we do on the platform has a "show-like" quality: rehearsals, sound checks, selecting the best singers for solos. Where does the performance end... and the praise begin?

We have an endlessly kind and gracious God; He knows we struggle with this concept. And thankfully, there are some very practical ways to change our mind-set:

1. Pray before and after every rehearsal and presentation, and give credit to Whom it is due. This seems like a given, but in the thick of preparation for a big presentation, this all-important step can get lost in the shuffle. Write it down!
2. Verbally remind yourself and your team of praisers that we have an Audience of One, and that everything we do is for His glory. Do this often!
3. Plan and practice your musical presentation as if it depends on you, but pray fervently, knowing it really depends on God!
4. Teach your group to call it a "praise-formance" and not a "performance." (If you do this with your kids choir, don't be surprised if they start correcting you when you accidentally call it a performance!)

If you practice these techniques regularly, it will eventually become second nature to put your focus where it belongs. And you will be building a magnificent praise-dwelling for our awesome Lord, Who deserves our everything.

Now go work on your clubhouse.

In the name of our Audience of One, Who gives us every reason to praise,

Sharon K. Turney

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