

Exploring Service & Worship from *Enjoying Jesus*

As we approach the last month of 2018 we also are coming to the end of our study brought to us by IF Gathering—Enjoying Jesus.

“As you employ these disciplines in your life, you will see how life giving they truly are!

That’s not because these disciplines carry power in themselves; it’s because each of the disciplines points us to Jesus. These are tried and true ways to enjoy Jesus.

*When we **meditate** and **study scripture**, we see God’s sovereignty and faithfulness.*

*When we **live a simple life**, we free ourselves to focus on the Lord.*

*When we **fast** and **observe the Sabbath**, we remind ourselves that our satisfaction is in Him.*

*When we **give** and **serve**, we become more like Jesus.*

*All the spiritual disciplines we’ve talked about drive us to a deeper **worship** of God.”*

From the study *Enjoying Jesus*, page 147.



Vanessa Moran, who attends Casa de Luz in Sacramento, California, shares her testimony of what it means to serve Him in and through her life.



MADE TO SERVE

By Vanessa Moran

“Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” – Psalm 73:25-26

Am I meant to have this heart for God? According to the psalmist, God literally became the only thing he desired on this earth. Am I meant to have a heart that is solely focused on my Creator; a heart that is so in love with God and confident in Him, that I will not be shaken by this earth, for my God promises to be “the strength of my heart”? What is my response to this powerful God? – Am I meant to serve Him? Am I meant to love Him that much? The answer to these questions is a resounding yes.

Although I grew up in the church knowing about God, I didn’t take Him seriously. When I was 19 years old, it was as if God woke me up from my sleep. He showed me how big He truly is...but even as I make this statement now, I cannot fully comprehend the power of the loving God who is sitting on His throne! He helped me realize that I am called to serve and love Him with my whole life. He is not meant to be a part of our life, but instead, He is worthy to be what we live for. He is worthy to be the center of our life. When a person encounters God, there is a thirst to worship and serve Him in some way. The great news is that the God of the universe actually wants us to serve Him.

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his

life as a ransom for many.” – Mark 10:45

Take a moment to let that sink in. Jesus was literally God in the flesh, and yet, He chose to serve human beings rather than Himself. Well what does that mean for us? If we are called to be more like Jesus, then we are called to serve and love people, in such a way that would magnify the love of God. Jesus did this on earth, and He can help us do the same, even when it’s difficult to do so.

I am now 24 years old, and for the past three years, God has allowed me to be a nursing student. Before going to the hospital to meet with patients, my friend and I always pray for God to work through us. We pray for the strength to love and the desire to serve those that we meet, even when it’s not easy to love them. Whether it’s providing warm blankets for a family member, giving medication to manage a patient’s pain, or taking time to talk with someone about their struggles, I want to serve people as Jesus served me. No matter how tired I get, I am reminded that I am called to love and serve people, just like Jesus.

I also work for a woman who has ALS, a neurodegenerative disease that weakens muscles and physical function. Every Saturday I come to her house and assist her with chores that need to be done, such as

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doing laundry, cooking meals, and even taking her to the hair salon. ALS has slowed her ability to do different activities, such as walk and talk at a regular pace. This woman also happens to love Jesus. Despite all of the issues she battles daily, she is constantly joyful, and she always credits God for her joy and peace. I am honored to love her through my actions. In other words, I am honored to serve her, and every week she somehow finds a way to serve me. She serves me by giving me food, hugs, encouraging words, and by reminding me of God's love.

No matter what I am doing or where I am, I am a servant. If you are a follower of Christ, you are called to be a servant of the Most High God and a servant to the people around you.

Jesus desires to be close to the sick and He died on a cross for those that seem unlovable. With help from God Himself, we have the power to love the people around us. We have the ability to serve. Please take a moment and think of someone that you are being called to love.

You, child of God, are commanded to **“use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” –1 Peter 4:10.**

God has provided every one of His children unique spiritual gifts that should be used to serve others. Perhaps you love sharing words of encouragement. Maybe you love to speak or you're a really good listener. Maybe you have the gift of hospitality or giving. Whatever gift you have in your possession, God gave it to you for a reason. He wants you to take part in His mission to change people's lives through His gospel.

Pray to have a heart of a servant, a heart like Jesus. Everyday there are opportunities to worship God through serving others. Magnify His name through your life, and **“do everything in love.”**

–1 Corinthians 16:14



THE DISCIPLINE OF WORSHIP

As the season of remembering Jesus' birth approaches we are drawn to 2 groups of people – the shepherds and the magi. The shepherds and wisemen's life styles were totally opposite ethnically, socially, culturally, and economically. But when they met at the feet of Jesus, they worshipped on common ground. They were the only ones who came seeking the newborn King.

After the shepherds were stunned and awed by the company of angels who announced his coming, they hurried off to Bethlehem to find the baby. After they had seen him they spread the word.

The wisemen believed the scriptures. They traveled several hundred miles to worship Jesus guided by the star that moved.

“When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him.” Matthew 2:10-11

The wisemen came, they bowed, they opened their treasures and presented them to Him...but before all of that... they fell down and worshiped Him. The wisemen were overwhelmed at the sight of the one they had come so far to see, the one they had waited so long to honor, the one they had paid so much to sacrifice their gifts upon—and when at last they saw him they fell down and worshiped him.

“In our individual lives, we worship Him in the way we think, the words we speak, and the actions we take. We worship God in our thought lives by focusing on truths about His character, maybe taken from books we have read or favorite passages of scripture. When we drive to work and turn off the radio to thank God for all He has done for us—that is worship. When we interact with others and point them to Jesus—that is an act of worship. When we've just closed our eyes to go to sleep and whisper a prayer telling God we love Him—that is worship.” From Enjoying Jesus page 145





CONNECTING YOU WITH NEW IDEAS

Our Vision

To connect women of the North American Baptist Conference and help them fulfill their calling.

Our Mission

To connect women of the North American Baptist Conference, encouraging them in their desire to serve God, and providing them with valuable tools and resources to accomplish what God is calling them to do.

Our Core Values

CALLING AND WORTH

We value the essential leadership role women play in ministry.

QUALITY RESOURCES

We value God's Word and seek resources that are Biblically sound, applicable and accessible.

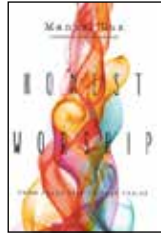
BROADER CONNECTION

We value supporting the broader vision of the North American Baptist Conference and developing a connection among North American Baptist Conference women.

LEGACY & THE FUTURE

We value the legacy of women who have gone before us and are committed to engaging the next generation.

Honest Worship: from false self to true praise



Manuel Luz – creative arts pastor of Oak Hills Church in Folsom, California

"It started with a question between a father and a son, the son asking why the church needed smoke machines in

worship. This question led to one of the most honest explorations of worship I have read. Manuel Luz is a true artist, musician, worship leader, etc. and he delves deep into what it means to worship from the depth of one's soul. He's not advocating for a style of worship, nor does

he denigrate any type of worship. Rather, Luz looks at the heart of the worshipper connecting with the heart of God in ways that are both God-honoring and authentic. This is a fantastic book that I would recommend to anyone involved in worship, from the worshippers in the pews to those responsible for leading people into worship. I have read quite a few books on worship and this one is the best by far. Go out and pick this one up. You will not be disappointed."

Reviewed by Dave Weiss Arts, Ministry, Outreach for the Kingdom

Christmas Devotional: 31 Days of Christmas



A personal testimony from Heather Hayashi

"Last December, I observed something. Everyone I talked to was stressed about the upcoming month. They had simply resigned themselves to being

exhausted after Christmas. It seemed like the way it was—the accepted reality. But I wondered, does it have to be that way?

For the next 31 days of December, I would discipline myself to sit quietly with the Lord, read Scripture and respond in prayer from the reality of that particular day. It wasn't about spending time when things slowed down, it was about making time as a discipline. I decided to post the prayers on my blog as an experiment and to perhaps encourage others.

What I discovered was a deep quieting of my heart. I sensed God's Spirit inviting me to walk closely with Him, to relax, to be loved and simply, love others. I released my grip on schedules, ideas and strategies for spending or not spending money. When I felt tempted to scramble for control, I held back and listened.

By the end of the month, I was renewed and refreshed. Not only was my heart more attentive to God, but some of the hidden drive behind my actions was revealed as God showed me my fears and insecurities. In that space where I relinquished control, I was able to see God pour his love out to me and through me in a gentle and life-giving way.

So, you may ask, having done this self-challenge, what is my conclusion? The answer does not exist in the numbers in your gift-budget, the list of events in your calendar, the menu for Christmas dinner or the traditions you choose to keep or reject. If your focus remains on Jesus and you desire Him rather than feeling in control, or getting what you want, then He will not disappoint you. And it will probably be more about what He has to say to you about His love for you rather than any large changes of direction in your life. But, from my experience, that itself is a welcome gift.

May you experience God during this month of December and may your life, and this world, be quieted by His love and profoundly changed for His glory."

You may purchase this devotional through Amazon or rhythmsofgrace.ca.

Connecting in British Columbia



We are made to live connected—to God and to each other. The NAB Women’s Connection Leadership Team is in the process of refreshing our focus, our look and our future. In order to be in touch with the women of the NAB family we felt it necessary to connect with you face to face to hear your stories, become aware of your needs and to help women in each region/association connect with each other.

On September 29, seventeen women representing churches in the lower mainland of the British Columbia Association came to Bethany Baptist. Over a luncheon provided by our team, we heard these women share their heart for women, their stories of how they are reaching the women in their churches, and their dreams for the future of their ministry.

What a fantastic event! It was such a wonderful event to attend and to be inspired by the work of other women in ministries locally. So often, we operate in our church “silos” and are completely unaware of God’s work happening in other NAB churches. I really enjoyed meeting the other ladies and hearing about what they were doing. It was very interesting to note that many of the challenges we are facing in our own ministries are happening at other churches as well. I believe that if we came together more often, it would be a real blessing to uplift and encourage each other. What joy there would be to create synergy and multiply God’s work in a meaningful way. You can definitely sign me up for the next ladies lunch!

Thank you for inviting Cornerstone to be part of this event!

*Blessings,
Sue Cheung*

Cornerstone Evangelical Baptist Church

We asked the women of British Columbia what would be helpful for ministry; here is what they shared:

- Online available resources: vetted speakers (cost, topics, comments from attendees, contact information), activities that worked, recommended Bible/book studies
- How to use technology more effectively
- More inclusion of single moms
- Mission projects using actual workers not just sending money
- Gatherings with teens (promote young women leadership training)
- Multigenerational gatherings
- Sharing between regional NAB churches; meeting periodically to share ideas and encourage each other.

We have begun working on a way to bring resources to you.

We would love to see this event happen in the other 10 NAB regions/associations. We want to connect with you to hear your stories and understand your needs.

– The Women’s Connection Leadership Team