

"Encountering God through Dance is the wonderful journey of a radical lover of God, Saara Taina. In it is the invitation for everyone, yielded to Jesus, to learn how to worship extravagantly."

—BILL JOHNSON, author of *When Heaven Invades Earth*

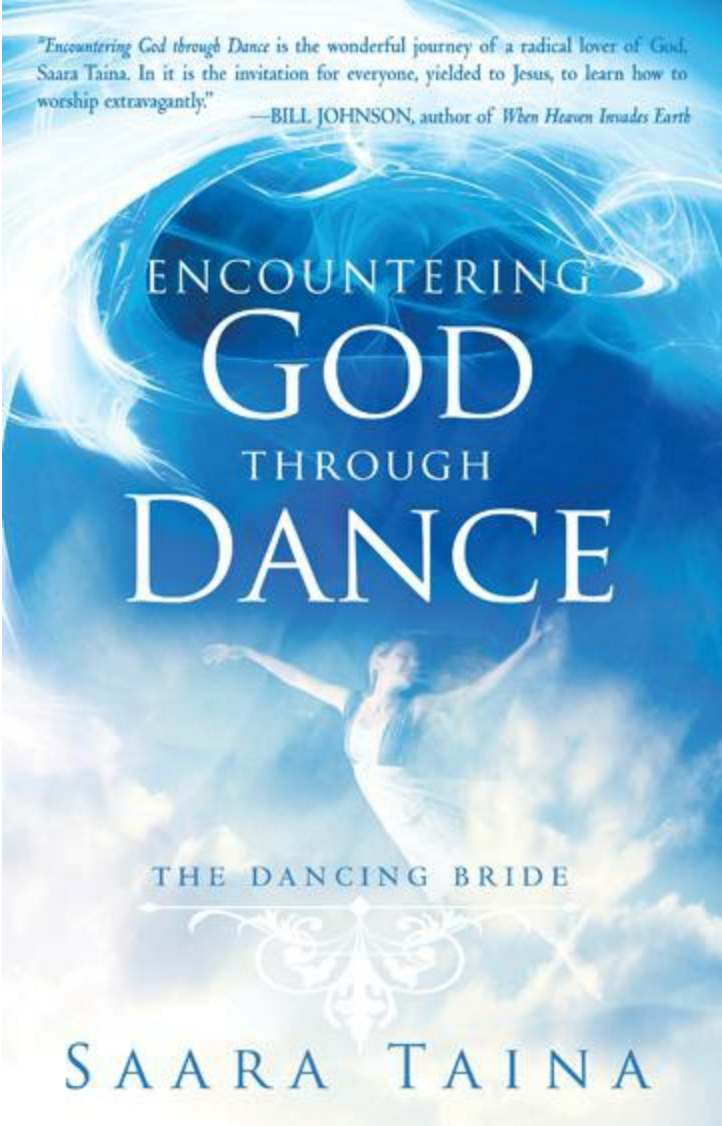
ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH DANCE

THE DANCING BRIDE

SAARA TAINA

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S A A R A T A I N A

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For more information on foreign distributors, call 717-532-3040.

Reach us on the Internet: www.destinyimage.com.

ISBN 13 TP: 978-0-7684-4127-7

ISBN 13 Ebook: 978-0-7684-8834-0

For Worldwide Distribution, Printed in the U.S.A.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 / 13 12

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Acknowledgments

First of all I want to thank Jesus. You are the love of my life. This book is all for You and for Your glory. You deserve a worshiping Bride from every nation and tribe. You deserve to be worshiped in all creative ways! Thank You, dear Holy Spirit, for inspiring and guiding me...and thank You, Papa God, for Your steadfast love throughout my life.

I want to thank my amazing parents, Anna and Jaakko Taina. You are an endless source of support and encouragement. I have learned so much about God's love from you. Mom, you used to tell me that the purpose of life is to learn how to love, and both you and Dad demonstrate that with your lives.

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I want to thank my sister, Eeva, my brother-in-law, Tony, and my nieces and nephews, Serafiina, Josi, Mirella, Elia, Adi, and Ayana. You guys bring so much joy to me. I carry all of you in my heart wherever I go. I love you so much!

I want to thank my brother, Eero. Your encouragement and friendship have helped me to get through

many challenging seasons. You always inspire me to go further and never give up. I have learned so much from you. You are the best brother I could hope for.

I want to thank all my spiritual fathers and mothers:

Peter and Hilde Tkaczyk, Kevin and Theresa Dedmon,

Roy and Mary Kendall, Jeff and Julie Crabtree, Gutta

and Jacqui Rao, Pekka and Leila Valmari, Pekka and

Pirjo Puurunen, Pentti and Päivi Matara, Bob and Ruth

Yule, David and Lin Saunders, and Terje and Eva Kon-

radsen. All of you have been an incredible support in

different stages in my life. Thank you for all your prayers and your wisdom and love.

I want to thank my dance teachers in Australia:

Jane Farrelly, Arna Elmes, Jessica Van Loon, and Emma

Bedoukian. You have been much more than just dance

teachers to me. Thank you for your love and patience

and for believing in me.

I want to thank all my friends all around the world!

Thank you for sharing different parts of your journey of life with me. Special thanks to Liesl Gray and Melodie

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Rice, who have helped me with my communication skills in English.

I want to thank my wonderful church family at Bethel. Thank you Pastor Bill and Beni Johnson and Pastor Kris and Kathy Vallotton and all the wonderful leaders at Bethel. Thank you for creating an environment where there is freedom to worship Jesus in all creative ways. Thank you for not putting God in a box.

And thank you for your love and care. I felt right at home as soon as I came to Bethel. Special thanks for Bethel dance team leader Ann Mack and the Healing Rooms' leaders Joaquin Evans and Chris Gore and the Healing Rooms' dance team leader, Christina Chadney. Thank you for welcoming me in. It has been such a joy to minister with you. I know that the greater things are yet to come!

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Endorsements

Encountering God Through Dance is the wonderful journey of a radical lover of God, Saara Taina. To see

Saara dance is to see the pleasure of the Lord resting upon a person fully given to Jesus. She truly is a lover of God in the fullest sense. This book is both the story of her journey as a worshiper and a manual for instruction and inspiration. In it is the invitation for everyone yielded to Jesus to learn how to worship extravagantly. My prayer is that all who read this book will join the new breed of worshipers and from that group will come forth in great numbers dancers with purity and power. Done correctly, the dance carries a priceless expression of our love for God.

Bill Johnson

Senior Pastor of Bethel Church

www.bjm.org, www.ibethel.org

Author, *When Heaven Invades Earth*

and *Face to Face With God*

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Encountering God Through Dance is by far the most refreshing book I have read in a long time. Saara Taina has given her life to a core area of life that is far too marginalized in many churches. Worship is the normal

activity of Heaven, and Jesus has called us to begin to learn this art of ministering to God right here on earth.

One of my favorite sayings regarding leadership is,

“The messenger is the message.” Anyone who has ever

been in worship where Saara has danced has seen wor-

ship in line with what the apostle Paul called the “simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.” Saara’s ministry of teaching and leading worship is simply the overflow

of who and what she is—a lover of God, lost in the wonder of who He is.

Encountering God Through Dance will not only powerfully encourage the reader to move deeper into ex-

pressing his or her heart to God, but it will also, in a life-changing way, help the mind grasp in detail what it means to worship the Father in Spirit and in truth. In

1994 I received a vision from God I called “The Vision of the Dancing Bride.” It still continues to grip me 16 years later. This is the book I wish I could have read back then to more fully appreciate what the Lord said to me then

and is still, eternally, calling all of us into—a lifestyle of abandonment to the lover of our souls!

Marc A. Dupont

Mantle of Praise Ministries, Inc.

www.marcdupontministries.org

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Finally, a book that doesn’t just talk about the power of Kingdom dance but testifies about it through gripping stories from Saara’s own life as one who has

trained others in dance throughout the nations. She

supports her beliefs through a sound biblical framework, which opens up our understanding of the high value of

dance in every believer's life. As you read through these pages, you will be gripped by Saara's heart for worship, which is at the core of her desire to educate and train others that dance is first and foremost a love offering of worship to the Bridegroom.

As I read through this book, I was amazed at the

level of commitment and compassion Saara has for

others to truly see how dance can shift and change

culture, heal others, and become a mighty weapon for

those who choose to worship God with understanding

and intentional pursuit. This is a must-read for those who want to start a dance ministry at their church or

want to understand the biblical foundation of dance.

She offers practical advice for how to start a dance

ministry and the fundamentals that anchor a successful

team in dance.

Rarely do you see a book that offers passion, tes-

timonies, and biblical expertise so others can be fully equipped. Find out how this Finnish dancer has danced

throughout the nations and how hope and healing can

be brought to yourself, your family, your church, or your nation. I highly

recommend this book—a must-read for

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those who pursue dance and those who want to see it in
their church!

Theresa Dedmon

Director of Prophetic Arts

at Bethel Church, Redding, CA

www.theresadedmonministries.com

We have personally experienced the breakthrough
power of the dance many, many times in Succat Hallel,
our 24/7 worship room that overlooks Mount Zion in

Jerusalem. Saara Taina is one of these gifted instruments in God's hands to
bring breakthrough in difficult situations, light into darkness, and freedom
from bondage

through anointed dance.

Dance is mentioned repeatedly in the Psalms, and

Saara very clearly lays out the importance and necessity of the dance in
worship in this wonderful book. If we truly want to please the King, we will
worship the way David

did! This book is an excellent manual, full of moving personal testimonies of
the power of the dance and our call, as believers in Yeshua, to be "The
Dancing Bride."

Rick and Patti Ridings

Succat Hallel

www.jerusalempraise.com

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Preface

“The Spirit and the bride say, ‘Come!’ ... Come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:17a, 20b). I believe that our Lord Jesus deserves a bride who longs for His presence more than

anything else—a bride who is so full of the Holy Spirit that her heart’s desires are one with His. I believe He deserves a bride who is set free by the Holy Spirit to express her love and worship for Jesus with everything she is, without any fear or shame!

Jesus deserves all the creative worship from every

nation, tongue, people group, and culture. Everyone has an open invitation to be part of this worshiping Bride of Christ. Every people group has something unique to offer Him, something that no one else can give Him.

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Encountering God through Dance

In January 2009, I had a vision where I saw the

whole globe, and all of a sudden the borders of Finland, my home country, started vibrating. Then “the lady Finland” (as we call our country) jumped off the ground,

and filled with the Holy Spirit, started a wild worship dance before her Maker, inspiring the other nations to

do the same. As a representative of Finland, I want to

see worship from my nation setting other nations free to express their worship to Jesus, with all their talents and all their gifts! That is one of the main reasons I wanted to publish this book in English as well as in Finnish.

This book is written for anyone who wants to be

part of the dancing Bride of Christ. You don’t need to be a dancer or artistically talented. God is looking into our hearts, and a heart that loves the Lord is already inwardly dancing. Not all of us are called to be professional dancers, but I believe there is a “*time to dance*” (Eccles. 3:4b) for everyone corporately. I also believe there is time to release those whom God has called into the ministry of

worship dance. It is time for the Bride to dance!

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My Journey

The Lord guides each of us in a unique and personal way. I hope that my story will inspire you to boldly step forward into your calling, trusting the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you.

I have often been asked if I always knew that my calling is to dance for the Lord. I had the privilege of growing up in a wonderful Finnish Christian family where everyone loved Jesus. As far as I can remember, I have always loved the Lord and wanted to share His love with others. When I was in primary school, I was teased and mocked because of my faith in God. I remember feeling sad but only for the sake of my friends who didn't know Jesus and couldn't enjoy His wonderful presence. My calling to dance didn't start unfolding until later on.

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Encountering God through Dance

As a matter of fact, during most of my childhood

I lived in an environment where dance wasn't appre-

ciated, actually not even accepted. I was quite a lively child, so my parents signed me up for gymnastics. But

in my primary school years, I wasn't allowed to join in the dance classes we had at school because my parents

wanted to protect me from "worldly dancing." I can't

remember being upset about it because I already had a

good outlet to express myself physically through gym-

nastics. Looking back, I know that most of those dance

classes would have been totally harmless, but I can see how God used my circumstances to work for His best

interests in my life. God was calling me into the ministry of worship dance where all my dancing would be for His

glory. I got to wait for the time when He Himself was

going to start teaching me to dance.

I loved doing gymnastics. As a 12-year-old, I was

chosen to be part of the best gymnastics training team

in Northern Finland. My love for Jesus was also con-

stantly growing. I couldn't keep quiet about it, and soon I shared my faith with my new gymnastics friends. All of the seven little girls in my gymnastics group got really curious and started asking me questions about Jesus. Before and after our training sessions while we stretched, we would talk about God.

It didn't take more than a couple of weeks before all

those girls wanted to receive Jesus as their Savior! This was such a big miracle that it affected my whole life. I hadn't had friends who believed in God before. Now all

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My Journey

of a sudden all my gymnastics friends loved Jesus and wanted to get to know Him better. I was so impacted by the change I saw in their lives and in their whole families that I decided I was going to spend the rest of my life spreading the Gospel.

After my friends got saved, my mom started running a little Sunday school for them at our house. Around the same time, my parents and a couple of other Christian parents in my hometown founded a local King's Kids group, which is a family ministry of YWAM (Youth With a Mission). The ministry was all about getting to know God and making Him known. We had gatherings

with worship, prayer, Bible teaching, and fellowship, and we did both local outreaches and international ministry trips. It was a wonderful opportunity for us to get activated in our faith and use our gifts for spreading God's Kingdom. We got to do a lot of school visits where we

could openly share the good news about Jesus through songs, dances, dramas, and testimonies.

The dances we did with King's Kids were very sim-

ply choreographed, often with just hand movements,

but through them I got my first taste of how it feels to worship God with my whole body. I loved it! I joined

every possible King's Kids outreach in Finland. And I

was always so excited about summer holidays so I could

go on international missions trips to different countries.

My greatest joy was seeing people encountering God

personally. I was and still am so thankful to my parents that they made it financially possible for me to travel

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with King's Kids six summers in a row and spread the

Kingdom of God in Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Latvia,

Lithuania, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Russia, and the

United States.

During these King's Kids years and even before that,

I had received lots of prophetic words through different international ministers saying that God wanted to send

me to expand His Kingdom and to carry His presence to

the nations through dance. When I first started receiv-

ing these words, I was quite hesitant because I didn't see myself as a dancer at all. I enjoyed creating some choreography and teaching it to others, but I never thought

dance would be a significant part of my life. I thought, if anything, I was a gymnast, not a dancer.

As a teenager I became even more active in gymnastics and made it to the youth National Team of Finland.

This meant even more weekly training, intense training camps, and competition trips. When I was in high

school I trained nine times a week, six evenings and two mornings of apparatus-specific training, and on top of

that a gymnastics ballet class once a week. On top of my school hours, I trained about 23 hours a week, not even counting the weekend camps and competition trips. I

decided to do my high school in four years instead of

three to ease the workload. Even then it seemed like

there weren't enough hours in a day. And I often found

myself in a situation where I had to choose between a

gymnastics camp or a King's Kids outreach. I felt like I was being drawn in two directions at once.

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My Journey

After my first year in high school, I again had a tough choice to make. This was even tougher than the previous ones. I really wanted to go on a mission trip to Florida, but the trip was going to last a whole month and I knew I couldn't take that long a break from gymnastics. The previous trips I had gotten by just doing some stretching and strength exercises, which often meant doing splits in the bus aisles, standing on my hands in gas stations, or getting up super early to do a bunch of sit-ups before anyone else woke up. But this trip was going to be too long a break from my personal gymnastics training.

After praying about it, I told my coach that it was time for me to quit competing and doing gymnastics. I cried for two nights, but I knew a new season in my life was about to start. Even though the decision was pain-ful, I made it wholeheartedly, knowing that the Lord was with me. I had already made the choice earlier of giving my whole life for God's Kingdom, and I wasn't going to make any compromises.

Now I had so much more time and energy to invest into the King's Kids ministry. I started taking more responsibility and

working as the choreographer for

our local group. But I was very eager to get out of high school so I could be even more focused on giving my

time to serving God. After I graduated from high school in 1999, I moved to northern Norway to do a DTS (Discipleship Training School) with YWAM (Youth With a

Mission). It was a nine-month-long Bible school and was

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specifically aimed for young people and training them

for ministry and missions. As part of the course, I went on a missions trip to Egypt and Jordan for almost two

months. Before doing the DTS, I thought that it would

be a time to dig deeper into the Word of God, but God

seemed to have other plans for this season in addition

to taking me deeper. He started gently telling me that it was time to start worshiping Him with my whole being. I didn't hear the audible voice of God, but this prompting in my heart was so strong that I knew it was Him.

When I quit my gymnastics training, I thought that

it was the end of all my physical expression. That's why I was so surprised now that God seemed to be offering

back to me the very thing I had given up for the sake
of following Him. Of course I had still been part of the King's Kids ministry
and continued dancing in their
choreographed dances, but I had never danced sponta-
neously before the Lord. I had such a deep longing to
express my worship with my whole body because I felt
like words were not enough to express what I felt on the inside. But at the
same time, I felt so inadequate and in-capable of doing it, and I started
arguing with God: "I'm not a dancer. I don't have any proper dance training.
I can't do this!" Then God spoke to my heart: "You are a
worshiper, and I will teach you to express your worship with everything you
are." So I made a "deal" with God:
if He would teach me by His Holy Spirit, I would be willing to be His private
student and do whatever He asked
me to do.

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My Journey

My worship dance started with very careful steps. In
my Discipleship Training School, I shared a room with
two other girls. We often took turns in getting to have alone time in the room.
When it was my turn, I locked

the door and closed the curtains, just to make sure no one would see me. Then I would turn on a worship CD and start dancing in the presence of the Lord. Those moments were something unforgettable, something incredibly precious. I felt the nearness of the Holy Spirit stronger than ever. As I danced with Him, He started guiding every move I made. There were also moments when I couldn't even move because the presence of God was so strong. I had been baptized in the Holy Spirit years before and had been able to speak in tongues for a long time. But this time it was like God gave me another language—a language of movement.

This whole experience was actually quite similar to speaking in tongues. Holy Spirit gives the heavenly language, but the person needs to use his or her mouth, or in this case his or her body to express and communicate with the language. When I let the Holy Spirit fill me up, the movement started bubbling up from my inmost being into my whole body. Through dance I was also able to communicate emotions that I didn't have words for. My relationship with God became somehow more intimate. At this stage I didn't really even know what the Bible says about dance, but I knew I experienced the presence of God in a very tangible way when I danced.

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After I completed the Discipleship Training School,

I was asked to work as a staff member for the next school.

I felt like God had just started a deep work in me, so I was more than happy to stay in this faith-filled environment. At the beginning of that year, our school did a trip to Bergen, southern Norway, where we took part in a big worship conference. The main speaker was a prophetic

pastor, Marc Dupont, from the United States. I remem-

ber loving every bit of that conference, but most of all I was looking forward to the worship times. I looked for an empty space in the very back of the conference hall

where I could worship freely and nobody could see me,

but I wasn't as hidden as I thought I was. In the middle of the worship time one of the Norwegian pastors walked up to me and said that Pastor Marc had asked if I could come and dance in the front. I must have looked a bit

shocked, as I had never danced in front of a big crowd.

However, the pastor continued, "You don't need to per-

form or do anything different from what you are doing

right now. Just go and worship!" Then he rushed me up

the aisles.

Everything happened so fast that I didn't really get

a chance to object, so I just closed my eyes and decided to focus only on Jesus. Straight away I felt the presence of God. It felt like I was dancing right at the feet of Jesus. It didn't matter anymore whether I was alone or

surrounded by a crowd. All my attention was on Him.

That worship time was like a foretaste of Heaven for me.

After the meeting Pastor Marc came to ask if I would be

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My Journey

able to come and dance also in Helsinki, Finland, where they had their next conference. Through these events I

started to understand that God didn't give me the gift

of dance only for the sake of my own prayer life, but

God also wanted me to draw others into His presence

through dance.

The same school year we did a mission trip to Ar-

gentina and Uruguay. I was in charge of the outreach

program, and so I ended up teaching many dances to the

students. We got to do a lot of street concerts and tell about God's love through dance, drama, and testimonies.

It was amazing to see so many people encountering the

love of God and starting to follow Jesus. During this trip, the Holy Spirit started teaching me more about the meaning and importance of worship. I started dreaming about doing a school of worship somewhere in the world.

When I was in Argentina, I met a girl named Anna

whose parents led a prayer and worship center called

Succat Hallel in Jerusalem. She told me about a School

of Worship, which was also in Jerusalem and connected

with Succat Hallel. I hadn't really thought of going to Israel, but right away a verse from Acts 1:8 popped into my mind:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit

comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in

Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to

the ends of the earth.

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Encountering God through Dance

It was as if this verse just interrupted all my other thoughts, which made me wonder if the Holy Spirit was trying to get my attention. Maybe He wanted me also

to start this new adventure from Jerusalem and then go

with the power of the Holy Spirit even to the ends of the earth. As I was thinking all this, I walked to my tent, and when I stepped in, the first thing that happened was that a friend of mine who was sitting in the tent read out loud the very same verse. I was stunned, but I decided not to tell anyone about this yet. The same evening we had a

meeting with the local YWAM team. And the theme of

the evening was—surprise, surprise—Acts 1:8.

I felt like God was leading me to go and do the

School of Worship in Jerusalem. But the biggest hin-

drance seemed to be the lack of finances. I had learned to know God as my Provider during the last few years,

but my faith was really stretched this time. I needed

thousands of dollars for the school fees and didn't have any savings. There were only a couple of summer months

left before the school would start. My parents were hoping that my brother Eero and I would go with them to

Alaska for the summer. (My sister Eeva lives in Alaska

with her husband, and she had just had her first baby.) Of course I was really excited about getting to visit them and my parents even promised to pay for the flights, but going on that trip would have meant that I wouldn't

even be able to get a summer job to earn some money.

After praying about it, I decided to go to Alaska with my family and leave the worrying about finances to God.

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When I got to Alaska, I was invited to speak at

one of the church services at the church that my sis-

ter's parents-in-law were pastoring in Healy, Alaska. I was very excited about the opportunity to bless the local believers. They welcomed me very warmly. After I

finished sharing, the pastor announced that they would

like to take an offering to support my studies in Israel. I was pleasantly surprised, but I didn't expect to get very much. The church is in a small village, so there weren't many people at the service, and I knew several of them

had big financial needs themselves. So, you can imagine how amazed I was when the offering was \$2,000, and the

church gave on top of that \$1,000, and one family there gave me another \$1,000. I was so shocked that I didn't

know if I should laugh or cry!

So in the fall of 2001, I flew to Israel with big ex-

pectations. I would have probably been as excited no

matter where I was going to do a school of worship, but after I had been in Israel for a while, I started to realize the significance of studying in Israel. The school lasted for nine months and I loved every bit of it. It was such a privilege to get to learn more about the culture where Jesus lived while He was on earth.

The school itself was multifaceted, and we got to be part of so many different projects. We volunteered to help in some local churches and Christian organizations. We studied Hebrew and had different kinds of Bible studies. We were part of two musicals. Most importantly, we got to spend a lot of time just worshipping

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Encountering God through Dance

and adoring Jesus. There were 12 “gates of worship” in

Jerusalem. These gates were places of worship and prayer that were located in different parts of Jerusalem, each facing different directions. Each gate had a daily two-hour

“worship watch” when the people at the gate worshiped

and prayed specifically for the nations that were on that sector. In this way there was an ongoing 24/7 prayer and worship from all around Jerusalem. Our school was in

charge of one of those gates, so we got to spend time

daily in worship and intercession. We also got to partner with Succat Hallel and be part of their worship times.

Quite frequently we got to join in their all-night wor-

ship times, which they were pioneering during that year.

I could feel how the Holy Spirit was doing a deep work in my heart, especially while we were worshiping.

When I returned to Finland, I could tell that God

had given me a whole new level of freedom. I started getting invitations to come and teach about worship dance

in churches, schools, and conferences all around Scandinavia. In one conference that was held in northern

Finland, I was asked to dance with a girl who is a well-trained professional dancer. I knew that if I had been

asked to do that some years ago, I would have been terrified. But now I was totally relaxed and just excited about worshiping God. The presence of God was so sweet in

the meeting, and there was such a freedom and joy.

Afterward this professional dancer came to chat

with me and asked where I had done my dance training.

At first I felt a bit embarrassed, but then I said that the

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Holy Spirit had been my main dance teacher. Of course

I had my gymnastics background, but I had never stud-

ied dance or taken dance classes. I still remember this girl's astonished look, and then she thoughtfully said: "If the Holy Spirit can teach you this much without any

other formal training, I wonder how far He could take

you if you had some training on top of that." To be honest, I was not the least bit interested in doing any dance training, but I thought if the Lord guided me in that direction, I would be willing. In that case, He would need to speak very clearly. Until then I would put the whole idea on a shelf.

I started getting more and more opportunities to

spread the presence of God through dance and to teach

other people to express worship with their whole be-

ings. I was living my dream. I traveled more and more in Scandinavia and also did some teaching in the United

States. Just when I started feeling like I was finally stepping into my calling, something happened that stopped

everything. It started with pounding headaches, and

little by little the pulsating pain spread all around my body. I started fainting and lost consciousness several times. I was hospitalized for a week, and all kinds of

tests were done, but the diagnosis was not very clear.

The only thing the doctors found out for sure was that I had really strong muscle tension, especially in my neck and shoulders. Different doctors had slightly different opinions about what was wrong, but everyone seemed

to think there was something unexplainable because

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the pain was so bad. One of the doctors just blurted out,

“This vicious circle needs to be stopped!” In Finnish this saying literally means “the circle of the witch.” This is how I felt about it too. The whole thing was an attack

from the enemy.

One day when I was at home, I started feeling awful

again. I was shivering from cold flashes, and all of a sudden I saw a vision of a horrible creature that came laughing toward me. I started praying out loud, confessing the Lordship of Jesus. And I also yelled for my mom to come and pray with me. All I remember after that was that I

fell on the ground and then everything went black. My

mom told me afterwards that my face had turned first

white and then grey. I was unconscious. Anyhow, the

following experience was incredible. Of course I wasn’t dead, but I think my spirit was already on its way to

Heaven. All my pain disappeared right away, and I was

in a soft, warm place that was so bright and full of God’s glory. I started hearing a beautiful worship song. I had never heard the song before, but still I knew it and could sing along.

The next moment I woke up to my own voice as

I was yelling out loud: “Mom, don’t!” My mom was, of course, really freaked out and tried to bring me back to a conscious state by lifting up my legs. The reason I was yelling was that I didn’t want to come back from that amazing place where I was. When I heard my own voice, I regained consciousness. My mom had called for one Christian doctor to come and see me and also alerted

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a couple of intercessors to pray for me. Soon I was feeling fine. The medical diagnosis was that my blood pres-

sure had gone very low. In any case, it was obvious that the enemy was trying to scare me. The enemy’s plan just didn’t quite work out. This whole experience gave me

even deeper understanding that my life is in God’s hands.

I knew that nothing could separate me from His love!

In the spring of 2003, my health was so much better that I was able to go to England and do a five-month-long leadership training school called Soul Time with a church called Soul Survivor in Watford, though dur-

ing that time I was often in a lot of pain. I used strong painkillers and muscle relaxants regularly, but even with them, I was bedridden many times. One British doctor

was listening to my symptoms and suspected that I had a condition called fibromyalgia. I had never heard of that sickness before, so I didn't know anything about it.

Around the same time, I met a girl who had been diagnosed with fibromyalgia a couple of years earlier.

Her story wasn't very uplifting. She told me she used to be a dancer, but because of this sickness, she couldn't dance anymore. Her balance had gotten so bad that she

often struggled even with walking. She had been told that there was no remedy for it and that the symptoms were just going to get worse with time. When I heard

this, I felt like my heart was literally breaking. I remember lying on my bed and crying before God. I said to Him that I would rather have Him take me to Heaven than

leave me on earth in a condition where I couldn't do

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anything. Then I heard the Holy Spirit gently whispering in my ear: "What do you mean by not being able to

do anything? Aren't you still able to worship?" Those

words were like refreshing water thrown on my face,

waking me up from the wilderness of self-pity. I decided to start worshiping God in the midst of my pain and

doubts. It didn't take long before I felt the presence of God in a very tangible way. I realized that even if I was robbed of everything else, the enemy could never steal

the presence of God from me. I felt such a joy—an indescribable joy!

Soon after this experience, God started healing me

from all of my pains. By now I had been taking painkillers and muscle relaxants for several months. My doc-

tor had told me that I shouldn't stop taking them all at once even if I was feeling better. My body would need

to adapt little by little. But in the middle of one worship service, I felt the Lord tell me that He had healed me and I wouldn't need any more medicines. I went to

talk to a female pastor who had been my mentor while

I lived in England and told her about this dilemma. I

didn't want to disobey the doctor's orders, but at the

same time, I thought I had heard the Lord's voice really clearly. That's why I wanted to submit this decision to one of my spiritual mothers.

This pastor said right away: "Well, if you heard

God's voice, I encourage you to do what He said!" So I

quit taking the medicines that night and haven't needed them ever since! I was so thankful that God had healed

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me, but I was even more thankful for His presence. I knew that my life wasn't about dance, but it was about worship. Dance is just one tool to express my worship to God. I don't want it ever to become an idol for me.

But just to make it clear, I don't think God made me

sick so I could learn this lesson. According to the Bible, all sickness is from the enemy. But God's grace is truly amazing; He can turn our darkest moments into our

greatest victories!

Soon after I was healed, I got an invitation to come

and dance at a national King's Kids gathering in south-

ern Finland. The same professional dancer who I had

met earlier was also at this conference. After I danced, she came running to me and asked where I had been

studying dance this past year. I was quite amused by the question and explained that because of my sickness, I

hadn't been able to take a single dance class the whole year. I had been in bed more than ever in my life. She

looked at me puzzled and said that it was clear to her that something had dramatically improved in my expression.

Well, I knew what the change was. The Holy Spirit had been working on my heart. The condition of our hearts comes through in our creative expression whether we want it to or not!

After God restored my health I started getting new opportunities to minister through dance and to teach about worship dance. You can guess that I always emphasized the heart of worship. I got to dance and do workshops and seminars in Finland, Sweden, Norway,

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Denmark, England, the United States, Israel, and Tai-

wan. I was surprised by the amount of invitations, especially since I didn't have any proper dance training. At this point I started thinking that maybe in the long run it would be beneficial to have some technique training.

I remembered what a prophetic pastor friend of mine,

David Saunders, had told me a few years earlier: “Saara, if God leads you to go and study dance at some point, be willing to do it. God has plans for you beyond what you can see!” I had tried to not to think about that word too much because I didn’t have any interest in taking dance lessons. As I thought of this word now, I also remembered my dancer friend’s encouragement to study dance. Even

though I still wasn’t too excited about the idea, I decided to lay it before the Lord with an open heart.

In the spring of 2005, I went to a national YWAM

gathering in Siilinjärvi, Finland. One evening, just before I went to bed, I had been praying for the Lord to

guide my steps. In the middle of the night, I jumped up and yelled out loud: “Kangaroos! It’s raining kangaroos!”

As I realized I had been dreaming, I burst out laughing, and so did my roommates. The next day I was teased

about my late night kangaroo encounter. Of course we

didn’t take it seriously, but we joked that maybe God

wanted me to go to Australia. The next day I traveled to another city in southern Finland, where I led a workshop about worship dance. There I met a girl who started telling me about a friend of hers who was studying dance in a very good School of Creative Arts. It was a Christian

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school, and as I was listening to this girl telling about it, I realized that this

was the first time ever that I was actually getting excited about a dance school. When she told me the school was in Sydney, Australia, I almost

jumped! She didn't need to try to persuade me to get her contact details to find out more about it.

This college was under the Christian City Church

in Sydney. I checked out their website and everything

looked amazing, so I sent my application papers right

away. I was still a little hesitant because I had never heard of this church before or even personally met anyone who had been there. The same summer (2005), I

was invited to Taiwan for the second time to teach about worship dance. In one of the churches, I got to know a

wonderful Taiwanese family with whom I had a won-

derful unity of spirit. They started asking me about my plans, so I told them that I was thinking about going to Australia to study dance there. To my surprise, they told me that they had actually lived in Sydney and been part of that very same church! Their son had even worked for that college. They gave me their warmest recommendation, telling me that I would love the place! Once again God knew how to calm my hesitant mind.

When I returned to Finland from that ministry trip

to Taiwan, I got another funny confirmation that I was

on the right track. Pastor David Saunders was doing a

prophetic training school at Nokia Mission Church in

southern Finland, and he invited me to come along and

dance there. Before I got a chance to tell Pastor David

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about my plans, he prayed for me. He said a sentence

appeared in his mind, but it didn't really make any sense to him. The sentence was, "Drinking tea with Aussies."

I found that hilarious. Those were the two new things

in my life! Just a couple of weeks earlier, I had started drinking tea, which I had literally never done before,

and in a couple of months I was planning on going to

Australia. God does have a good sense of humor!

As you can probably guess, I moved to Australia full

of expectations. During the three years that I studied

there, God gave me even more than I expected. It was

a lot of hard work but also a lot of fun! All the classes were very practical, and everything was done with excellence. In the dance course we specialized in contem-

porary dance, but we also had weekly technique classes

in ballet, jazz, and exploratory contemporary dance. In addition to that, we had choreography classes and worship dance classes. In the third year, we also had some advanced technique classes, focusing on pirouettes and

jumps. The whole School of Creative Arts had seven

departments, and every year we did two big productions

mixing different art forms. It was so inspiring! Through my own dance major work, I also got very excited about

choreographing dance pieces. God released so much

creativity and showed me how dance can be used in so

many different ways.

I started to understand the wisdom of God in send-

ing me to study dance. Learning the right techniques and movement pathways doesn't only make dancing easier,

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but it also helps to protect our bodies from unnecessary injuries. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and we need to take care of them. I also believe that

God rejoices when we give Him our best and develop

the gifts He has given us. In our college, we had won-

derful dance teachers, and I'm so thankful for all their encouragement and their spirit of faith. But I'm most

thankful to the Holy Spirit, who has been, and still is, my number one dance teacher. He is the greatest source

of encouragement and inspiration!

I'm not trying to say that the way God led me is

somehow the right pattern. As a matter of fact, there is no right pattern. God leads all of us as individuals. He knows where you are at and what you need. For me it

worked best that God first set me free to dance in His

presence and then gave me an opportunity to get some

technique training. I think for my personality it would have been much more difficult to find the freedom in

dance if I had had the formal training first. Having said that, I know some lovely worship dancers who started

by taking dance classes and afterward found the freedom to express worship through dance. Training is not a hindrance nor is it a prerequisite for worshiping God, but I believe it is a great tool to help us worship God with excellence. Psalm 66:2 commands us to "*make His praise glorious!*" The most important thing is the attitude of our hearts, but I believe that a worshiping heart wants to offer to God the very best!

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Does God Approve of Dance?

I'm sure for most of you the answer to this question

is very obvious. God is the Creator, so He is also the

source of all creativity. He has created all movement to bring Him praise. This can be seen on so many different levels. In the macro-cosmos, the pathways of the plan-ets are incredible; they move and spin around as if perfectly choreographed. What about the micro-cosmos?

You might have observed in physics class the amazing pathways of the neutrons and protons within the atoms.

You don't even need to do major research. Just look out the window and see the first spring butterflies flying in the most beautiful sequence. Or what about the sunrays

dancing on the lake in mid-summer...or the colorful

autumn leaves spinning around as the wind takes them

by surprise...or the soft, unassuming snowflakes float-

ing toward the frozen ground? The list could go on and

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on! All of this fascinating "dance of life" was created by God. *"God saw all that He had made, and it was very good"*

(Gen. 1:31a).

Even though all of creation testifies to how move-

ment and dance can reflect God's glory, it's always good to take a deeper look at what the Bible says about the

subject. The Word of God really is a lamp to our feet

showing us His ways. God's Word is packed with heav-

enly wisdom that the Holy Spirit wants to reveal to our hearts so we can put it into practice.

The Joyful Dance of Salvation:

Following the Example of God!

We are called to be imitators of God (see Eph. 5:1).

As God's children, He should be our example and model

in life. So does God dance? Let's take a look at a couple of Scriptures.

The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to

save. He will take great delight in you, He will

quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you

with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

The expression "*rejoice over you*" is translated from the Hebrew word *guwl* (1523). This verb can literally be translated as: "to spin round under the influence

of any violent emotion, to be glad and rejoice." It de-

scribes the kind of joy that needs to be expressed with the whole being.

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When Hebrew-speaking people read this verse, they can easily get a picture in their minds of God dancing a joyful dance around us. The Jerusalem Bible actually translates this same verse using the word *dance* in it:

Yahweh your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult with joy over you, He will renew you by His love; He will dance with shouts of joy for you as on a day of festival
(Zephaniah 3:17).

There is another interesting verse in Psalm 32:

You are my hiding-place; You will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance
(Psalm 32:7).

The word *surround* is translated from the Hebrew word *cabab* (5437). This word can be translated: “to re-volve, to circuit, to walk, to turn self or to whirl.”

In other words, God is whirling around us
with a victorious dance and song of salvation and

deliverance!

Jesus wasn't afraid of showing His feelings and

emotions while He was on earth. We can see this, for

example, in Luke 10. The whole context is again the joy of salvation. The 70 disciples of Jesus had just returned from their mission trip when Jesus told them:

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However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20).

The following verse continues:

At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy

Spirit, said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things

from the wise and learned, and revealed them to

little children. Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure" (Luke 10:21).

The expression "*full of joy*" is translated from the Greek word *agalliao* (21). It literally means to jump for joy. It describes the kind of joy that can't be held in on the inside but has to be expressed with everything you

are. I can easily see how Jesus leaped and danced while worshiping the Father for revealing the secret of salvation to His followers!

The prophet Isaiah also refers to the joyful dance of salvation:

You have enlarged the nation and increased their

joy; they rejoice before You as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder.

For as in the day of Midian's defeat, You have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across

their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. ...For

to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the

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government will be on His shoulders. And He will

be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Ev-

erlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:3-4,6).

In the third verse the word *rejoice* is translated from the Hebrew word *guwl* (1523). It's the same word that was used in Zephaniah 3:17 to describe the joyful dance that God dances over us.

These verses in Isaiah speak prophetically about

how we will be set free from all the powers of the en-

emy through Jesus. His work of salvation will lead us into the joyful dance of celebration, as in the day of Midian!

(I will write a bit more about the day of Midian in the next chapter.) The redemption of Jesus is setting us free to dance the same joyful dance that God Himself is dancing over us (see Zeph. 3:17)!

Salvation really gives us a reason to dance and cele-

brate! One of the clearest examples in the Old Testament that refers to the salvation that will come through the redemption work of Jesus was the Passover. In Hebrew, this feast is called *pecach* (6453) (see Ex. 12:11). This word is derived from *pacach* (6452). And one of the meanings of *pacach* is—surprise, surprise—to dance.

Heaven as Our Model

In Luke 15, Jesus tells a parable that is known as

the story of the prodigal son. Actually, this story is really more about the extravagant love of the Father. We

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all know how the story goes. In the end the son who had squandered all his wealth comes back to his senses and

decides to return home. His father is overjoyed when the son comes back. In verse 25, we read about how the older son, who had been working in the field, comes home

and hears *the sound of dancing and singing*. The father, who is representing our heavenly Father, has started a

big celebration! In Heaven there is an outburst of joy

and dancing when a sinner repents and comes home.

This story contains a wonderful example of the joyful

dance of salvation. Later in the same parable, the father says to the older son, who is a bit upset:

But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this

brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he

was lost and is found (Luke 15:32).

At the end of the parable before this (the parable of

the lost coin), Jesus also says:

In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who

repents (Luke 15:10).

Heaven is our model and example. If there is cel-

ebration and dancing in Heaven when someone gets

saved, it must be pleasing to God that we do the same

here on earth!

We can only have a faint idea what worship is like

in Heaven, but I'm sure it supersedes everything we have

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experienced on earth. In the Book of Revelation, chapter 4 describes how the four living creatures worship

God day and night, and the 24 elders fall down, casting their crowns before the throne and saying:

*You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive
glory and honor and power, for You created all
things, and by Your will they were created and
have their being (Revelation 4:11).*

Their worship never ceases. What a wonderful

thing it is for the Bride of Christ to start worshiping God together with all the heavenly beings! It's time for the Bride to get ready for this:

*Then a voice came from the throne, saying: "Praise
our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him,
both small and great!" Then I heard what sounded
like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing
waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:
"Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns.*

Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has made herself ready” (Revelation 19:5-7).

The People in the Bible as Our Examples

One of the first dancing worshipers named in the Bible is Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron. After God had made the way for the Israelites to go safely

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through the sea and drowned Pharaoh’s army, Miriam led the women of Israel into worship dance:

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron’s sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing. Miriam sang to them: “Sing to the Lord, for He is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea” (Exodus 15:20-21).

Of all the male worshipers in the Bible, King David

is the best example of someone who wasn't ashamed of dancing before the Lord. In the second Book of Samuel, there's a colorful description of David dancing before the Lord as the ark of the covenant was brought back to Zion. David wasn't dancing just by himself, but he was also leading all the people of Israel:

David and the whole house of Israel were celebrating with all their might before the Lord, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, sistrums and cymbals (2 Samuel 6:5).

David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might, while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouts and the sound of trumpets (2 Samuel 6:14-15).

The same event is recorded in First Chronicles:

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David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with

harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets

(1 Chronicles 13:8).

David was unashamed and unapologetic about his worship. He loved the Lord so much that he didn't care about criticism even when it came from his own family.

When David's own wife mocked his spontaneous worship dance, he replied:

I will celebrate before the Lord. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humili-ated in my own eyes (2 Samuel 6:21b-22a).

I'm sure this wasn't the last time David danced before the Lord. The Bible says that David was a man after God's own heart. He was a worshiper, and God had revealed to David how He liked to be worshiped.

David built a tabernacle where there was ongoing worship 24/7. There were thousands of musicians, lots of

singing, joy, lifting of hands, shouts of victory, kneeling and bowing down, prostrating before the Lord, and, of

course, dancing. This order of worship that David pio-

neered has been restored over and over again, especially in times of revival! Just to name a few occasions, it happened during the reigns of King Solomon (2 Chron.

7:6), King Jehoiada (2 Chron. 23:18), King Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:25), and King Josiah (2 Chron. 35:4,15),

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and during the time of Ezra (Ezra 3:10) and Nehemiah (Neh. 12:24-46).

The Book of Acts tells us how God Himself wants to rebuild David's tabernacle:

After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, and

all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord,

who does these things that have been known for

ages (Acts 15:16-18).

The tabernacle of David was very different com-

pared to the tabernacle of Moses or the temples in the

Old Testament. The core of David's tabernacle was wor-

ship. I believe that's the reason why God's heart longs to rebuild this "*fallen tent*." As a fulfillment of this prophetic verse, the Lord is raising up worshipers. We have yet to see this Holy Spirit-inspired worship in all its creative expressions! This river of worship will attract and pull along the

masses, sweeping them into the very

presence of God. I believe the restoration of dance for glorifying God is part of this rebuilding work of the

fallen tent of David.

Thoughts From the New Testament

Once in a while, I hear people being hesitant about worship dance and even about worship expressions in general because the New Testament doesn't seem to

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give clear instructions about either one. But we know that the Old Testament Scriptures were the only written Word of God for the early church, and the New Testament clearly says:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for

teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thor-

oughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy

3:16-17).

Even though the New Testament doesn't give de-

tailed instructions for worship, there are clear references that validate the forms of worship and the instructions that were already revealed in the Old Testament (see 1

Cor. 14:26; Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16).

There was no need to repeat the foundational

teaching about worship because it was already written

down in the Old Testament. When it comes to differ-

ent worship expressions as New Testament believers, we

have the advantage and the privilege of having the Holy Spirit as our personal Teacher and Counselor. I think we often make things too complicated. Worship should be

an automatic reaction when we get to experience the

joy of salvation and the presence and the love of God.

It's impossible to hide a thankful heart. A heart that's truly thankful can't help but express thankfulness in one way or another!

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In the letter to Romans, we get a wonderful

exhortation:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1).

Our whole bodies are called to be living sacrifices to God. Offering a sacrifice does not depend on our feelings. God deserves our worship, whatever we feel like and whatever our circumstances look like.

Worship should never be limited by how we feel, but expressing our emotions to God is also very important. When the Holy Spirit sets us free to express our emotions, we often are simultaneously set free to express worship. One of the reasons we often don't worship God with our whole beings is that our emotions have been shut down in one way or another. If we have never learned to express our emotions in a healthy way, it can be difficult to express worship.

While Jesus was on earth, He said:

To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to

each other: “We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not cry” (Luke 7:31-32).

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Our generation seems to suffer from the same con-

dition. Expressing emotions is often considered to be a weakness or as something nonspiritual. Jesus didn't seem to think that way; in fact, it was quite the opposite. He showed us by His own life how important it is to express our emotions. Jesus wept, He expressed His joy with His whole being, and He also expressed righteous anger (see John 11:35; Luke 10:21; Matt. 21:12).

I believe that the Holy Spirit is on a mission to set

God's people free to express emotions in an open and

healthy manner. At the same time, the Holy Spirit is

setting us free to worship God in an authentic and genuine way and with our whole bodies!

All of us are called to worship God, but God has

given some people a specific call to lead others in worship. In the Book of Acts, there is an interesting verse where the first seven deacons are ordained (see Acts

6:5). One of the deacons is called *Prochoros* (4402). This Greek name can be

translated as “before the dance”;

implying that the person is “the leader of the dance.”

I wouldn’t be surprised if this deacon was called by that name because of his calling to do that very thing: to be a dance leader.

Dance to the Lord!

After looking at all these Scriptures, I’m sure it’s not unclear as to whether God approves of dance or not. He

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doesn't only approve it; He expects and asks us to dance for His glory:

Let them praise His name with dancing...for the Lord takes delight in His people; He crowns the humble with salvation (Psalm 149:3-4).

Praise Him for His acts of power; praise Him for His surpassing greatness. Praise Him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise Him with the harp and lyre, praise Him with tambourine and dancing, praise Him with the strings and flute, praise Him with the clash of cymbals, praise Him with resounding cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord (Psalm 150:2-6).

We all are called to worship God, whether we are male or female, young or old. I believe God is on the move to set His Bride free to express worship with everything she is:

Then maidens will dance and be glad, young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into gladness; I will give them comfort and joy instead of sorrow (Jeremiah 31:13).

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3

Restoration of Dance

In the previous chapter, we came to the conclusion that God loves dance. You still might wonder why there has been so much negative talk about dance in many church circles around the world. I believe a lot of this has happened as a result of our ignorance. We haven't really understood the significance of dance in the Kingdom of God and God's original intention for it to bring glory to Him. Dance is a powerful tool that can be used for so many different purposes. Satan can't create anything, but he'll sure try to distort and pervert all the good gifts God has blessed us with. I think the enemy knows better than we do how big of an impact dance can have. Many of us know dance can bring a lot of destruction when misused by the enemy, but we don't always seem to realize how much havoc Holy Spirit-filled dance can cause in the camps of the enemy. The

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enemy is actually really scared, and that's why he is so busy trying to distort dance.

Sadly enough, many believers have seen too many examples of dance that's sensual and seductive or dance that's simply

focused on worshiping the human body.

Many Christians have at least heard of, if not seen, demonic dance used in some pagan rituals. No wonder

many Christians don't want to have anything to do with

dance. Another sad thing is that many of those who don't necessarily consider dance a sin don't think it really has any value or purpose in the Kingdom of God. This is just what the enemy wants. He is more than happy to keep

dance in his toolbox.

The Meadow of Dance

Psalm 83 tells of the Israelites' cry for God to crush

their enemies. The author of this Psalm prays:

*Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their
princes like Zebah and Zalmunna, who said, "Let
us take possession of the pasturelands of God"*

(Psalm 83:11-12).

Who were Oreb, Zeeb, Zebah, and Zalmunna? Why

did the author of this Psalm want the enemies of Israel to have the same lot as them? These same people are

mentioned in the Book of Judges. They were the princes

of Midian. Judges 6 tells us how the Midianites had been oppressing the Israelites for seven years. Eventually the

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Israelites turned to God to ask for help. The Lord chose Gideon and 300 men of Israel to fight for freedom. They had a special strategy:

Dividing the three hundred men into three companies, he placed trumpets and empty jars in the hands of all of them, with torches inside. ... The three companies blew the trumpets and smashed the jars. Grasping the torches in their left hands and holding in their right hands the trumpets they were to blow, they shouted, "A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!" ... When the three hundred trumpets sounded, the Lord caused the men throughout the camp [of Midian]) to turn on each other with their swords. The army fled to Beth

Shittah toward Zererah as far as the border of Abel Meholah near Tabbath (Judges 7:16,20,22).

The Israelites defeated their enemies with the help

of God. An interesting detail is that the place where the victory was won was called *Abel Mechowlah* (65), which

[means "Meadow of Dancing." Rosalyn Smail describes](#)

[in her book, *Dance—: what does the Bible say about it?* 1](#)

how this was one of the places that the enemy wanted

to occupy. It was one of those “*pasturelands of God*” that Psalm 83:12 was talking about. However, this was the

very place where the enemy was defeated. I believe this story reveals the truth symbolically that dance is not

an insignificant wasteland. It is a beautiful and fruitful

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meadow that belongs to God. It’s also a place where we can overcome the enemy with God’s help.

Setting the Artists

Free From Captivity

In Jeremiah 24, the prophet Jeremiah tells of a vision the Lord showed him.

After Jehoiachin son of Jehoiakim king of Judah and the officials, the craftsmen and the artisans of Judah were carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, the

Lord showed me two baskets of figs placed in front of the temple of the Lord (Jeremiah 24:1).

Let's unpack this verse a little bit. Jeremiah had a vision about figs during the time when Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had conquered and taken over Judah. Nebuchadnezzar had taken the king of Judah, the officials, the craftsmen, and the artisans into exile.

It's pretty obvious why he wanted to take the king and the officials, but why bother dragging along the craftsmen and the artisans? Aren't they quite an insignificant bunch of people for this king of the enemies?

No, not at all! Creativity is very powerful. Artists also have a significant role in the Kingdom of God. I think

the enemy still has the same strategy to take the leaders and artists in the Kingdom captive.

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Later on in the same vision, God let Jeremiah get a closer look at those baskets of figs. One basket had very good figs and the

other basket had bad figs, so bad that they were not edible. The Lord compared the good figs

to the exiled people of Judah—the leaders and the cre-

ative people. In the same chapter, God gives a wonderful promise for the exiles:

My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I

will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and

not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know

Me, that I am the Lord. They will be My people,

and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with all their heart (Jeremiah 24:6-7).

Many artists are still living “in exile.” I’m not only

talking about professional dancers, actors, musicians,

singers, songwriters, fine artists, visual artists, filmmak-ers, etc. The enemy wants to steal the creative potential from every one of us. However, it’s true that people who are pursuing arts as a profession are often those who need special prayer covering. I absolutely hate hearing stories of artists who have been bound by the enemy through

different addictions. There is hope, though; there is a lot of hope! Just like God promised in Jeremiah 24:6-7, I believe that artists are returning to the light of God’s Kingdom and there will be a great revival among them.

Artists who are filled with the Holy Spirit will be car-riers of God’s presence and catalysts for revival all over

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the world. No doubt dancers will be part of this creative wave of God.

In Jeremiah 31, the prophetic declaration of the restoration and renewal continues. I believe this Word of the Lord is for the whole Bride of Christ:

I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness. I will build you up again and you will be rebuilt, O Virgin Israel. Again you will take up your tambourines and go out to dance with the joyful (Jeremiah 31:3b-4).

Restoration of dance can only come through finding a new intimacy with God. When we experience and receive God's love in a personal way, new creativity will be released from that place.

Four Horns and Four Craftsmen

When arts are restored back to their original purpose, to glorify God, the power of God is also released through art. In the Book of Zechariah, there is an interesting vision that the Lord showed

Zechariah:

Then I looked up—and there before me were four horns! I asked the angel who was speaking to me, “What are these?” He answered me, “These are the horns that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.” Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen.

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I asked, “What are these coming to do?” He answered, “These are the horns that scattered Judah so that no one could raise his head, but the craftsmen have come to terrify them and throw down these horns of the nations who lifted up their horns against the land of Judah to scatter its people”

(Zechariah 1:18-21).

To put this in a simple way, Zechariah saw four horns and four craftsmen. The horns symbolize the destructive and dividing powers of the enemy. The four craftsmen are coming to undo the works of the horns,

or the works of the enemy. I believe this is also a prophetic word showing how, through the arts and creativ-

ity, God will frustrate the plans of the devil. The artists will bring wholeness and unity where there has been

shame and division.

The Significance of Dance

in the Kingdom of God

Dance and the arts in general are not some kind of a new trend in the Kingdom of God. Dance has always been an integral part of the Jewish culture and their

worship. Dance wasn't an unfamiliar thing for the early church either. There have been seasons when the importance of dance has been forgotten, but dance has still been used in different forms throughout church history.

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God created dance first of all to bring pleasure to

His heart and to glorify His name:

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory for ever! Amen

(Romans 11:36).

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created (Revelation 4:11 KJV).

Just like everything else, God created dance for

His pleasure. What a privilege it is to get to bring joy to God's heart and glorify Him through dance. It's time to stake a claim for the meadow of dance, which is God's

property.

Dancing to the Lord can cause big shifts in the

heavenly realms and on earth. I have realized that the

effects of dance are very tangible, especially in three areas. Of course, the power behind these shifts is the Holy Spirit, not the dance by itself. In other words, the Holy Spirit moves through dance that is dedicated to God.

This work of the Holy Spirit is seen in:

1. The life of the dancer/dancers—healing, restoration, and freedom.

2. The life of other people who see the dance—

God-encounters, salvations, and everything

mentioned in point number one.

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3. The enemy being defeated—strongholds and bondages broken and destroyed.

All these things are wonderful. (We will take a closer look at them in the next three chapters.) Still, it's important to remember that the highest goal is to bless God through dance. These other things are kind of like byproducts; they just happen when we give all the glory to God and let the Holy Spirit move unrestrictedly!

E n d n o t e

1. Rosalyn Smaill, *Dance—: what does the Bible say about it?* (Wellington, New Zealand: Christian Dance Fellowship New Zealand Inc., 1992), 16.

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4

How Does the Holy Spirit

Work in My Life

Through Dance?

As I mentioned in the previous chapter, the purpose

of worship dance is to bring joy to God's heart. It is not primarily for our own benefit. Even so, undeniably amazing things start happening in our hearts and lives when we worship God.

God is omnipresent; He is everywhere at all times,

yet He can manifest His presence on different levels.

God dwells, in a special way, in the praises of His people (see Ps. 22:3 KJV). When the presence of our loving

God envelops us in worship, we can't leave unchanged!

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His presence impacts and transforms our lives in very profound ways.

Into the Likeness of Christ

We will become like the one we worship. When the

Israelites turned to worship idols, it was said of them,

"They followed worthless idols and themselves became worthless" (2 Kings 17:15b).

This principle works both in a positive and a negative way, depending on who or what we worship. It is, of course, a very positive thing when we worship the Living God.

And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:18).

When we look to God with “*unveiled faces*” and worship Him in spirit and in truth (see John 4:24), He starts shaping us into His likeness. We begin to look a lot more like Him—of course not in the sense that we become

omnipresent, omnipotent, all-knowing, etc. Rather, His characteristics, His attitude, and His emotions start to rub off on us.

I got to experience the transforming power of God's presence in a very concrete way when I did the school

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How Does the Holy Spirit Work in My Life Through Dance?

of worship in Israel in 2001. I'm not an extremely brave or daring person by nature. That's why it was actually

good that I didn't know beforehand how much terrorism there was going to be during that year. Our school was located in Jerusalem, where we often used public transportation. Once when I was with two other students, we were about to catch a bus from the city center to our school. We were already on our way to the bus stop when one local friend of ours offered to give us a lift. We thanked her as she drove us safely back to school. Afterward we heard that there was a suicide bomber on the very same bus we had been heading to. Several people died, and even more were severely injured.

Another time I was taking a bus with two other students, this time from church back to school. All of a sudden, the glass in the front door was smashed to pieces, and all the passengers threw themselves on the floor, ending up on top of each other in a chaotic disarray. My friends and I had no clue what was happening, but we instinctively followed the crowd and hit the floor. One of my friends turned to me and yelled in panic, "What should we do?" I yelled back, "Just pray!" To be honest, I was thinking the next time I opened my eyes I

would see Jesus face to face. I don't even remember what I prayed—I probably used some “emergency tongues”—

but I'm sure it was one of the most honest prayers of my life. Well, soon enough we found out that it wasn't a life-threatening bomb attack. The bus had only been stoned

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while we were driving through an Arab area. Everyone survived without any injuries.

In the midst of these circumstances, there were moments when I felt like taking the next possible flight back to Finland. However, worship was the main key that helped to restore peace to my heart over and over again. We spent hours every day worshiping and adoring the Lord. Sometimes we worshiped through the whole night. Often I first unraveled my own heart before God and then started worshiping Him with my whole body, focusing on His greatness. I think worshiping God in truth means that we tell Him honestly how we feel and

what's going on in our hearts and after that focus on the goodness of God and the reality of His Kingdom, which

is more real than our circumstances. In other words, we recognize ourselves for who we are and Him for who He

is. In this way, we enable the reality of the Kingdom of God to invade our lives, and He can meet us exactly

where we are at.

King David gave us a wonderful example about be-

ing genuine in many of his psalms. As a matter of fact, the whole Book of Psalms is called *Tehillim* in Hebrew.

This means to pour out your heart to God. Dance, just

like all the other art forms, is a wonderful gift from

God because we can use it to express deep feelings we

might not even have words for. When we worship God

in truth, we allow His presence and the Kingdom real-

ity to fill our hearts and our whole beings. That's when our fears and doubts flee and our emotions, thoughts,

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words, actions, habits, and characteristics start reflecting more of Jesus.

One concrete example of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, specifically through prophetic movement and dance, is found in First Samuel 10. In this story, the prophet Samuel had just anointed Saul as king. Samuel gives Saul instructions about what to do next:

After that you will go to Gibeah of God, where there is a Philistine outpost. As you approach the town, you will meet a procession of prophets coming down from the high place with lyres, tambourines, flutes and harps being played before them, and they will be prophesying. The Spirit of the LORD will come upon you in power, and you will prophesy with them; and you will be changed into a different person (1 Samuel 10:5-6).

The words *prophesying* and *prophesy* are both translated from the Hebrew word *naba* (5012). The Good News Bible translates this word as “dance” to translate it in the right context:

...At the entrance to the town you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the altar on the hill, playing harps, drums, flutes, and lyres.

They will be dancing and shouting. Suddenly the spirit of the Lord will take control of you, and you will join in their religious dancing and shouting

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and will become a different person (1 Samuel 10:5-6).

Here is the same verse in a different translation:

...You will recite with them, and dance in unison... (1 Samuel 10:6b FBT).

This prophecy was fulfilled in First Samuel 10:10.

In other words, Saul joined in Holy Spirit-led dance.

This experience changed him, literally, into a different person. I believe that the presence of the Holy Spirit

through this prophetic dance changed Saul so he was able to receive the anointing and the boldness needed to step into the office of a king.

Healing Dance

God wants to heal us from physical sicknesses,

injuries, pains, dysfunctions, and emotional traumas

and spirit and soul hurts. He wants to bring healing

and wholeness to us as a whole person: spirit, soul, and body. Through the cross of Christ, God has already paid the full price for our well-being. I have experienced

God's healing and restoring power many times while

dancing in His presence. Worship dance is one of the

ways God wants to release His healing presence into

our lives.

In several places in the New Testament, an inter-

esting Greek word, *therapeuo* (2323), is used. This word

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is translated in a couple of Scripture verses as “to heal”

(e.g., Matt. 10:8) or “to cure” (e.g., Luke 9:1). It's the root word of the word *therapeutic*. The same word is used in Acts 17:25, where it's translated as “to serve” or as “to worship” (KJV). The meaning of this word includes both

worship and healing. These two elements—worship and

healing—go hand in hand.

In the first chapter, I wrote about my own struggle

with sickness. I believe that through this sickness, the enemy was trying to hinder me from dancing for the

Lord. However, it's amusing to me that dance was the very thing God used in the process of healing me fully.

I remember several times when some of the symptoms tried to come back, but when I started dancing before the Lord, the pain left immediately. I could declare with the words of Psalm 30:

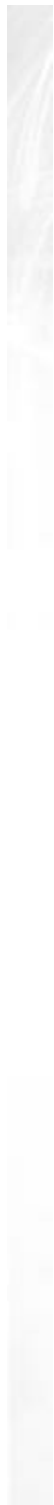
O Lord my God, I called to You for help and You healed me. ... You turned my wailing into dancing; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to You and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give You thanks for ever (Psalm 30:2,11-12).

God wants to turn our mourning and our sickness into dancing. We can receive this promise by faith and start dancing before the Lord even while we are still in the midst of sorrow or pain. By taking a dance step, we can, in a sense, activate our faith so God's healing power

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can be released. I have seen it in my own life and also in the lives of others.

Many dancers and dance groups have experienced this healing anointing while dancing. There was an early Jewish dance group called Therapeutea. Their dance was an expression of worship to God, but they were purposefully pressing into God for healing. It has been said that this was a common practice among the early church. Eu-sebius, the bishop of Ceasarea (A.D. 269 to 340), called [this ministry Christian and said, “It is still our custom to the present day to perform.”¹](#)

God created us to be creative and gave us the ability and desire to express ourselves with our whole bodies.

Our spirits, souls, and bodies are all connected. It’s only natural that physical expression affects our whole being.

This has been discovered even in secular art therapies.

Dance therapy is used to help open many kinds of emotional blockages and for inner healing in general. How much more powerful it is when the Holy Spirit Himself restores us as we dance for God’s glory!

E n d n o t e

1. Doug Adams, *Congregational Dancing in Christian Worship* (Austin, TX:The Sharing Company Press, 1971), 65.

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How Does Worship

Dance Impact Others

In the previous chapter, I talked about God's healing power being released through dance. God wants to heal

not only the dancer her or himself, but He also wants to manifest His healing power in the lives of other people who are under this healing anointing released through

the dance. By this I mean that people don't even need

to see the dance to receive God's healing touch through Holy Spirit-anointed dance. I have experienced this so

many times!

I am co-leading the dance team in the Healing

Rooms of Bethel Church in Redding, California. As

dancers we release God's healing presence by dancing

"over" people who need a miracle in their bodies. Often

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when we dance around people, they have their eyes

closed, but they can sense God's presence and receive

His healing touch. People who are receiving prayer don't even need to be present themselves.

One of my favorite stories about this kind of

dance is what happened in the Healing Rooms in the

spring of 2010. One couple asked me to pray for their

five-year-old daughter who had leukemia. The daughter

wasn't with them, but they gave me a key ring that

had a photo of her in it. I started dancing as I held

that key ring in my hand and felt the presence of

God straightaway. Then the worship leader "randomly"

said in the microphone, "Let's dance over cancer!" He

had no idea that was exactly what I was doing. After a

few weeks, I met the father of this little girl at church, and he was so excited to be able to tell me that their

daughter was totally free of the cancer! Of course

there had been many people praying for her, but it

was very special to get to be part of what God was do-

ing. God can work in so many creative ways. (I will

write more about this kind of intercessory dance in

Chapter 7.)

God Draws People to Himself

I have heard someone say, “If you want to make people hungry, eat in front of them!” I think the same is true about worship and worship dance.

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How Does Worship Dance Impact Others?

Once when I was visiting in Israel, I got to be part of a worship service where I danced before the Lord. After the meeting was over, one Jewish girl walked straight

up to me and blurted out, “I envy you!” I wasn’t quite

sure if she was upset about something or what she meant by that, but she continued, “When I saw you dance, I

realized that your relationship with God is much more

intimate than mine. You have something I don’t have.”

Before I had time to respond to that statement, she went on, “If you are able to have that kind of relationship

with God, it must be available for me too.” This was a

good kind of jealousy! Romans 11:11 tells us how “*salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious.*” It is precisely this kind of envy that causes a deeper hunger for God.

Through our worship, we can stir up hunger in other

people's hearts for God and for intimacy with Him. Jesus Himself said, *"But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself"* (John 12:32).

In this verse Jesus was talking about the kind of

death He was going to die. I believe this statement is

also prophetically telling us that when we lift Jesus up in our worship, He will draw people to Himself. I have

seen countless people encountering God in a fresh way

through worship and worship dance.

In 2004, I was in Taiwan for a month teaching about

worship dance in a couple of churches and in some youth camps. During one of the camps, we took a group of local

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youth with us to do an evangelistic event at one of the beaches. When we got there, we met a group of about

50 Americans. After chatting with them for a while, we

found out that they were in Taiwan because they were

studying to become Buddhist priests. We were quite sur-

prised but invited them to stay around.

The leader of our team asked me to start the program by doing a dance. I hadn't prepared any solo dance, so I just decided to improvise to a worship song that I had on a CD. The song had a really clear message about Jesus, but for the sake of some of the locals, I explained via a translator what the song was about. While I was speaking, the crowd was getting agitated, and some looked even angry. I was glad the rest of our team was standing right behind me, and I tried to keep my eyes on Jesus. As soon as I started dancing, I tangibly felt the atmosphere change. I became fully relaxed as the Holy Spirit fell on me and I let Him lead the dance. It was as if this noisy crowd all of a sudden froze; nobody moved or made any sound.

After I finished dancing, three Taiwanese Buddhist priests who were leading the Americans walked up to me. Their faces looked stunned as they thanked me, each of them shaking my hand. They said they had never seen or experienced anything like this before. I could see such hunger in their eyes for the presence of the Living God. They started asking if there was any website or anything where they could find out more about what they just experienced. We got to tell them that it was

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How Does Worship Dance Impact Others?

all about Jesus and they could find out more about Him

in any Christian church. The whole situation was quite

comical because they were the ones who were meant to

be training others to become Buddhists priests. At this point, they said that because of the rest of the group, they couldn't stay longer, but they were personally very moved by this.

It's a whole different thing to actually experience

God's presence rather than only hear about Him. There's a reason why the Bible says, "*Taste and see that the Lord is good*" (Ps. 34:8a)!

The Lord draws people to Himself as we worship

Him. I'm convinced that when people get to taste and

experience God's presence, they will get hungry for more of Him.

Freedom and Salvation

In the Book of Acts, there's a story of Paul and Si-

las being thrown in jail after they preached the Gospel in Philippi. In the darkest moment of the night, they

started worshiping God.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and

singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners

were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors

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flew open, and everybody's chains came loose

(Acts 16:25-26).

Paul and Silas chose to worship God in the midst

of a seemingly hopeless situation. They had been se-

verely flogged and locked in the darkest inner cell with their feet fastened in the stocks. In spite of all that, they knew that God was worthy of their worship. What was

the result of this midnight worship session? First of all, all the other prisoners listened. Then the presence of

the Holy Spirit filled the place so intensely that all the chains broke loose—not only the chains of Paul and

Silas but also everyone else's chains. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom! Shackles and chains

can't stand the presence of God. When God pours out

His Spirit on us as we worship Him, freedom happens

in many aspects: freedom from the oppression of the enemy and his lies, freedom from addictions, freedom from wrong thought patterns, etc. Where Jesus is being lifted up, the reality of the freedom of God's Kingdom will be released.

This is not the end of this story. It gets even better.

As a result of all this, the jailer and his whole family were saved and baptized and filled with joy (see Acts

16:27-34). When we worship Jesus, it's inevitable that there will be healing, freedom, salvation, and joy.

One of my favorite things is to worship God in places where there are people who have never experienced God's presence. I have had opportunities to dance

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How Does Worship Dance Impact Others?

in some most peculiar places: at a geological research institute in Finland, at Disney World in Florida, in a Russian prison, in a Romanian orphanage, in an Italian retirement center, in a Bosnian and Herzegovinian

hospital, at various beaches in Argentina and Uruguay,

at outdoor marketplaces in Latvia and Lithuania, on a

ship sailing between Ukraine and Israel, right by the opera house in the city center of Sydney, Australia, and in countless shopping centers and street corners all around the world. I don't think there is an occasion where worship dance wouldn't be appropriate. I have danced at

weddings, graduation parties, birthday parties, Christmas parties, independence parties, school assemblies, and

even at funerals. Worship should never be constrained

within the four walls of church.

He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise

to our God. Many will see and fear and put their

trust in the Lord (Psalm 40:3).

Our worship and praise are not only to be heard but

also to be seen. Dance is one way of making our worship visible. When we dance in worship, many will put their

trust in Jesus and receive Him as their Savior.

I think we have a lot more to learn in this area. I

have already seen God heal, set free, and save many

people through worship dance, but I think this is just

the tip of the iceberg. I believe we have yet to see the fullness of what God can do through dance and creative

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expression. Let's go boldly forward and be led by the Holy Spirit!

Testimonies About People

Encountering God's Healing Presence

Through Worship Dance

In the spring of 2011, I went on a mission trip to

Mexico City with a team from Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry. Our team ministered both in churches

and on the streets of Mexico City. There were over 30 in our team, but most of the time we split up into smaller groups. One afternoon part of our team was out on a street in front of an elementary school in a neighborhood just outside of Mexico City. I started worship dancing with a Norwegian girl in the middle of the street while a local pastor played guitar and sang worship songs. A whole

crowd of curious kids and parents gathered around us.

One of the guys from our team started calling out words of knowledge about all kinds of sicknesses. He started

out with a very simple word that someone had pain in

their wrist that God wanted to heal. One lady raised her hand, and she was completely healed. After that it was

like a street revival broke out. A whole bunch of kids

and adults started asking for prayer for all types of conditions. I got to pray for a lady who had eczema, and her skin softened and stopped itching right there. Another

lady had some sort of vein disease and all her pain disappeared. All the pain also left a little girl who had cancer.

Pretty much everyone whom we prayed for also wanted

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to get saved. All this started with a simple worship dance in the middle of a street.

On the same trip in Mexico, we also got to minister

in different churches and saw many healings there

as well. I got to see a cyst on a lady's hand shrink at least 70 percent in front of my eyes. Another lady who

had cataracts started seeing clearly. One of my most

precious memories from this trip is from a church service

in a place called Tultepec. I had been asked to do a dance there, but we arrived so late that I didn't have time to check if their CD player was working properly.

When I started dancing, the CD started skipping like

crazy, and after a moment it stopped altogether. For a moment it felt like an epic failure. I stood in front of a big crowd and had no idea what to do. Then I heard the Holy Spirit whispering in my ear that He was there and I didn't even need a CD, so I continued dancing, this time declaring God's promises and prophesying over the church as I was dancing.

All of a sudden, the presence of God just swept through the room. One of the locals jumped on stage and started playing the keyboard, and another guy started translating my declarations into Spanish. The first miracle for me was that I didn't become out of breath, even though I was dancing quite wildly while I was making the declarations. The whole atmosphere in the room shifted, and tears were falling from people's eyes as they started having encounters with God. People started getting healed of all kinds of sicknesses and pain without

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anyone even praying for them! I lost track of time, but after about 20 minutes, one of our team members asked

who had been healed and at least 20 hands were raised

right away. I believe this was a little foretaste of what God wants to do on a much greater scale. There is healing in God's presence.

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6

How Does Worship Dance

Affect the Enemy?

In Chapter 3 we discussed how the enemy has tried

to steal dance for himself and for his purposes. He has done this first and foremost because dance is a powerful tool in his hands too, but even more so because he

knows how dangerous Holy Spirit-anointed dance is for him.

Psalm 149 says:

Let them praise His name with dancing... May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands to inflict vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters, their nobles with shackles

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of iron, to carry out the sentence written against them. This is the glory of all His saints. Praise the Lord (Psalm 149:3a,6-9).

Our battle is not against flesh and blood. The kings

and nobles in this context refer to the principalities and powers of darkness. Of course Jesus has already won the victory over all the powers of the enemy by the cross:

And having disarmed the powers and authorities,

He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing

over them by the cross (Colossians 2:15).

It's a done deal, but through our worship and prayer and proclamation of His Word, we can appropriate this victory into every area of our lives. God has entrusted us with the keys of the Kingdom and given us authority to use these keys.

Worship dance is obviously not the only weapon in spiritual warfare. Psalm 149 talks also about the double-edged sword of His Word and the power of worship in general. However, one very important weapon is missing from our armament if we ignore dance altogether.

God Fights for Us and the Enemy Flees as We Worship

The Book of Isaiah tells us how the Lord Himself starts fighting against the enemy when we worship God:

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Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise from the ends of the earth, you who go down to the sea, and all that is in it, you islands, and all who live in them. Let the desert and

its towns raise their

voices; let settlements where Kedar lives rejoice.

Let the people of Sela sing for joy; let them shout from the mountaintops. Let them give glory to the

Lord and proclaim His praise in the islands. The

Lord will march out like a mighty man, like a war-

rior He will stir up His zeal; with a shout He will raise the battle cry and will triumph over His enemies (Isaiah 42:10-13).

No wonder the enemy hates worship. Many of the

psalms also say that as we exalt the Lord, we are saved from our enemies. Another good example is found in

First Samuel 16. The Spirit of the Lord had left King

Saul, and he was tormented by an evil spirit. Verse 23

tells us that every time the spirit was tormenting Saul, David would take his harp and play:

Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel bet-

ter, and the evil spirit would leave him (1 Samuel 16:23b).

The same principle is also seen in the history of Is-

rael. In Second Chronicles 20, Israel won a war just by worshiping God. King Jehoshaphat appointed the worshipers at the head of the army and:

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As they began to sing and praise, the Lord set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated. The men of Ammon and Moab rose up against the men of Mount Seir to destroy and annihilate them. After they finished slaughtering the men from Seir, they helped to destroy one another (2 Chronicles 20:22-23).

As the Israelites worshiped God, their enemies destroyed themselves. The same chapter tells us that Jehoshaphat and his men got so much plunder that it took three days to collect it and there was more than they could carry away. On the fourth day, the Israelites assembled in the valley of Beracah, where they praised the Lord. The name *Beracah* literally means praise. From that place, they returned to Jerusalem praising God because He had given them victory over their enemies. The victorious battle started with worship and ended with worship.

In 2000 I was on a mission trip in South America.

During the time when we were in Uruguay, there was a

big national gathering of witches. It was an annual festival when all the witches got together to worship their gods and perform demonic rituals. (These witches were

called “the white witches,” but according to the Bible, all witchcraft is from the devil.) They set up little posts all along the beaches and called evil spirits to come on people. Of course they just talked about spirits, not evil spirits or demons, but that’s exactly what they are. Many

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ignorant tourists think it’s just a fun game, but by taking part in these ceremonies, they come under demonic

influences.

During the last couple of years, rain had interrupted

these festivals so they hadn’t been able to continue their ceremonies. Rain had also kept most of the tourists

away. That’s why the witches wanted to make sure that

this year the weather would be favorable for them. They had checked it both through meteorologists and their

own foretellers, so it was supposed to be a done deal.

However, the local Christians agreed to fast and pray

and worship during that day, asking the Lord to send the rain. Our outreach team was taking part in this plot. In the morning of the day of the festival, we were all gathered in worshipping Jesus. All of a sudden, thick black

clouds started rolling across the clear blue sky, and a massive thunderstorm erupted during our worship meeting. I have never in my life been so thankful for rain! It was just like in the Book of Jeremiah:

*When He thunders, the waters in the heavens
roar; He makes clouds rise from the ends of the
earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings
out the wind from His storehouses (Jeremiah
51:16).*

As a result of this storm, their festival was once again interrupted. As one of their rituals, they normally put some cream cakes in the ocean to ease the anger of the spirits of the ocean. Because of the storm, big waves

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smashed the cakes back to the seashore. The next morn-

ing, the local newspaper had an article saying that the witches thought the spirits were angry because so many

people had turned to Christianity. The Lord fights for

us as we worship Him, but I want to emphasize that the battle is not against people.

*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood,
but against the rulers, against the authorities,
against the powers of this dark world and against
the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms* (Ephesians 6:12).

God loves all people and wants to save them from the power of the enemy.

Taking Ground in Worship and Partnering With Angels

When God appointed Joshua to lead the people of Israel after the death of Moses, He instructed him:

*I will give you every place where you set your
foot, as I promised Moses* (Joshua 1:3).

In theory God had already given the Promised Land to the Israelites, but in practice they still had to take the land.

We are often in a similar position. We need to take ground and step into the promises of God. The victory

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belongs to us as God's people, but we need to be actively taking ownership of the areas the enemy has taken control over. These kinds of battles often happen in the area of our minds. (I will talk a bit more about that in the next chapter.) We also need to be active in taking ground not only as individuals but also as a local and global body of Christ in our cities, in our countries, and worldwide.

God has given us so many wonderful promises in His Word. We should actively pursue them as individuals and as communities.

One key to receiving God's promises is worship.

When we worship the Lord, we are actively expressing our faith in Him and in His faithfulness. In this way, we align ourselves with His truth. That's when the armies

of Heaven also get activated and the Lord fights for us.

Every time we worship God, we are taking ground, even if we don't see any immediate change in our natural circumstances.

I mentioned earlier that when I did the school of worship in Israel, we often spent hours and hours in prayer and worship. Once when we were having a worship time in the old city of Jerusalem, we suddenly

heard a really clear sound that sounded like someone was blowing a shofar. The Bible tells us how the Israelites used to use those blowing instruments, made out of rams' horns, to give signals, especially in times of war. For example, when Joshua led the Israelites to take Jericho, the Lord instructed him to make seven

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priests carry shofars in front of the ark. On the seventh day, after the Israelites had marched around the city of Jericho seven times, the priests gave a long blast with the shofars, and as the Israelites gave a loud shout, the walls of Jericho fell (see Josh. 6).

When I lived in Israel, I realized that sometimes

people still bring shofars into worship services and blow into them as a prophetic act. But nobody seemed to have a shofar in this meeting I was just telling about. I had been dancing near the altar of this old church building, so I started looking around to see if I had just imagined the sound. Then I realized everyone was looking around

with bewildered faces. The next moment, we heard the

sound of a shofar again, but now it was even louder and clearer. There was such an authority and holiness in the sound that I had never heard before in my life. Everyone in the building was frozen in their places. I don't know how long the silence lasted after that sound, but

the presence of God was so tangible that nobody wanted to move. At the end of the meeting, one of the local pastors told us that in several places in Jerusalem, they had recently heard the angels blowing shofars as people worshiped Jesus.

This was a very concrete reminder of how the armies

of Heaven get activated when we worship. I think that's why many people have also seen angels, especially during worship. Worship shifts spiritual atmospheres, no

matter where we are geographically. Worship dance can

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be a prophetic act and a reminder for us that God wants to give us every place where we set our feet.

The enemy has a good reason to be afraid of our

worship. In 2004, I went to Taiwan for the first time to teach some workshops on worship dance. Before this

trip, the enemy tried to scare me. One night I had a

nightmare where a big, mean-looking creature appeared

in front of me. I had never seen anything like it, but

somehow I knew it was an evil spirit that had something to do with Buddhism. I screamed out loud, "In Jesus's

name!” I didn’t have time to say anything else before the creature took off as quickly as it had come, and the next moment I was wide awake.

Soon after this I flew to Taiwan. While I was there,

my friends took me to one of the local hotels, and there happened to be an exhibition of small statues. They

were miniatures of all the most important idols in Bud-

dhism. To my surprise, one of them looked exactly like

the creature I had seen in my dream. I was thinking we

had met before with this creature as I asked one of the hotel workers what that statue was. He told me it was

the leader of all the evil spirits in that area. No wonder it didn’t want me to come and teach about worship dance

in “its territory”!

However, we don’t need to pay attention to the

enemy’s attempts to frighten us. Jesus has already

won the victory, so we have nothing to be afraid of.

Even through my nightmare, I realized I only needed

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to say the name of Jesus, and the evil spirit had to

flee. I like the way the prophet Elisha calmed down his servant when the city, where they were presently staying, was surrounded by their enemies:

“Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, “O Lord, open his eyes so he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (2 Kings 6:16-17).

My prayer is also that our eyes would be opened to see more of the reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. In the Book of Hebrews, there’s a reference about angels:

Are not all angels ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? (Hebrews 1:14) I am sure most of us have been ministered to by

angels without knowing it. In the first chapter, I men-

tioned how Pastor Marc Dupont invited me to come

with his team to Helsinki, Finland, to dance at a worship conference. This was one of the first times I had ever

been asked to dance in worship. During that time I lived in northern Norway, so I was meant to fly from there

to Helsinki. I was supposed to catch an early morning

flight, and I was wandering around in the city center

of Tromsø before the sunrise trying to figure out how to get to the airport. I found a bus schedule in front of

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one hotel, but to my horror I realized that the first bus was coming so late that I wouldn't make it to my flight.

I prayed a desperate prayer that sounded something like this: "God, if You really want me to dance in Helsinki, You have to do something now!"

Within moments, a taxi pulled over right in

front of me. I was a bit hesitant, first of all because I hadn't waved him to stop, and second, because taking taxis is very expensive in Norway. Then I real-

ized a friendly looking gentleman had appeared right

behind me. He walked straight up to the taxi driver

and asked for a ride to the airport. I took a step closer and asked nervously if I could come along and pay for

part of the charge. The man turned to me and said, "Of

course you are coming with me, and you don't need to pay anything."

When we arrived at the airport, I had to hurry out

of the taxi because I still had to claim my plane ticket from the ticket office. I was thinking I would thank the man properly once he came in, but I never got a chance

to do that. He simply disappeared. The airport of Tromsø is (or at least at that time was) so small, with just one entrance, so it's very hard not to see everyone who is in there. But it was like this mysterious man just vanished.

I believe he was an angel God sent my way to make sure

I made it to this conference to dance for Him. I don't

think it was a coincidence that the very first time I became aware of being guided by an angel was at the very

start of my dance ministry.

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The War in Between Ears

Often the biggest battles happen in our thought lives, and the most furious battleground is between our ears.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary,

they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

The enemy tries to sow all kinds of lies into our minds that create unbelief, fears, depression, etc. That's why it's so important to break down every stronghold

that rises against the truth of God. In Romans it says: *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this*

world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:2).

It's interesting that just in the previous verse Paul exhorts us:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices,

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holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship (Romans 12:1).

I believe that when we give our bodies as living sac-

rifices to God, the Holy Spirit starts transforming our minds so that our thoughts align more and more with

His thoughts. I'm convinced that part of this transfor-

mation happens as we dance before the Lord and let the

Holy Spirit have His way in our whole beings. God's

presence has a major impact on our thought lives. When

the light comes, darkness has no choice; it has to flee.

In the same way, in the light of God's presence, all the powers of darkness have to bolt.

Worship and praise are the best medicine I know for

depression or for any anxiety or fear. In the Old Testament, there are seven different Hebrew words for praise.

One of these words is *halal* (1984). From the same root word comes the word *hallelujah*. Halal means to praise, to celebrate, to shine, to be clamorously foolish. It is the primary Hebrew root word for praise. And it describes

praise that's expressed with the whole body. It's used, for example, in Psalms 150, 113, 104, 105, and 106. Gregory, the bishop of Constantinople (AD 213 to 270),

[said, "May we flee from all the chains of the devil in](#)

[triumphant ring dances.”1](#)

I have been dancing specifically over the spirit of
depression in many places but especially in Finland.

It has been wonderful to see people set free and filled with the joy of the
Lord. The enemy doesn't have any

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legal right to oppress us unless we give it to him by believing his lies. By worshiping Jesus and declaring His truth, our thoughts are aligned with

God's thoughts toward us, and the enemy is unable to get any grip on our thought lives!

E n d n o t e

1. Doug Adams, *Congregational Dancing in Christian Worship* (Austin, TX: The Sharing Company Press, 1971), 65.

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Intercessory Dance

and Prophetic Dance

Dance as a Prayer Language

Dutch Sheets describes in his book *Intercessory*

[Prayer how the word *intercession* means to go or to pass between.1 Intercessors go in between God and mankind](#)

or in between the enemy and mankind to enforce the victory of the cross. Our prayers release and activate

Christ's finished work of intercession. The Hebrew word for intercession is *paga* (6293), which means to meet.

As intercessors we meet with God and with the powers

of darkness. We have the privilege and the authority in Jesus's name to release the power of God into the lives of people and into different situations.

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Dance is one form of communication. As I mentioned earlier, dance can be used as a prayer language.

God doesn't only hear, but He also sees. It sounds obvious, but we sometimes tend to forget it when we pray. There's nothing that hinders us from expressing

our prayers to Him with our whole bodies. If the word

intercession means “to go in between,” including active movement in the very essence of the word, why

wouldn't we use concrete movement as an expression of our prayers?

Prayer Dance Over People

In the first Book of Samuel in chapters 21 and 22,

there is an interesting story about intercession. David is running away from Saul because Saul intends to kill

him. As David is fleeing, he stops to see Ahimelech,

the high priest, in Nob. Ahimelech seeks the Lord for

David and gives him the sword of Goliath and some

consecrated bread. Unfortunately, one of Saul's ser-

vants happens to be around, so Saul gets wind of Da-

vid's escape route and goes to interrogate Ahimelech

and accuses him for helping David. Ahimelech answers

in his defense:

Who of all your servants is as loyal as David, the

king's son-in-law, captain of your bodyguard and

highly respected in your household? Was that day

the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! (1 Samuel 22:14b-

15a)

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Intercessory Dance and Prophetic Dance

In this verse is the Hebrew word *chalal* (2490), which is derived from *chuwl* (2342). One of the meanings of this word is to dance. That's why from this verse can

also be understood that the priest Ahimelech danced as

he prayed for David. Ferrah Fenton translated this same verse like this:

Upon the day when I danced to enquire of God

for him I did dance... (1 Samuel 22:15 FBT).

Rosalyn Smaill explains in her book *Dance—: What*

[*does the Bible say about It? how Fenton sees in these He-*](#)

[*brew words a dance to seek the word of the Lord in a*](#)

[*prophetic sense.*](#)² *Ahimelech used his whole body to ex-*

press his prayer for David. Very likely this wasn't the first time he did it.

When I studied dance in Sydney (at the School of

Creative Arts, Christian City Church), we had a weekly

class as part of the course where we practiced praying for people by dance. Once in a while we had visitors in the class whom we got to minister to. We prayed for them

using both words and movement. God gave us creativity to express prayers in many different ways.

There is no formula for how to dance prayers. The main thing is to be led by the Holy Spirit. But just to give you a practical example, we often started by putting the person who was receiving prayer in the middle

of the room. We prayed for a while, either in tongues or in our mother languages and then started dancing in

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front of or around the person who was receiving ministry. Sometimes all the dancers danced at the same time and sometimes we took turns, depending on how the Holy Spirit was leading in each situation. Sometimes we used music in the background and sometimes we danced in silence. Many people who were receiving prayer were very deeply touched by God. This could often be seen in floods of tears or other expressions of emotions. Sometimes the Holy Spirit spoke directly to

the heart of the person who was being ministered to, and we didn't need to interpret the dance. Often God also gave us dancers Scripture verses and words of encouragement and we got to share the prophetic words after we had danced.

As I mentioned at the beginning of Chapter 5, we can also intercede for people by dance when they are not present. The point is not that the person sees the dance but that God sees it!

Prayer Dance in Different Situations

We can also intercede for different situations through dance. At the school that I did in Australia, we used to do a big Easter production every year collaborating with different creative mediums. One year we were going to perform the Easter show for a crowd of school kids. Before the show started, all of us dancers were gathered together, and we felt like interceding for the whole production by dancing.

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Intercessory Dance and Prophetic Dance

As we danced and prayed, the presence of the Holy

Spirit came in a very tangible way, and we felt a breakthrough in our spirits. After the production, over 100

kids wanted to give their lives to Jesus! I'm not trying to suggest that it happened only because of our prayer

dance, but I'm sure the Lord used this time of prayer

to make a way for the obvious breakthrough. When

we first gain victory in the spirit, we can expect it to manifest in the natural.

My own prayer life has received many new di-

mensions through dance. Dance can be a helpful tool

in prayer even for practical reasons. If we are upset,

worried, scared, or angry about something, adrenaline

is released in our bodies. As we move our bodies, the

adrenaline dissipates as the energy gets used up, which causes us to feel better. Even just for this reason, it's good to sometimes move as we pray, especially if we are feeling emotional. Of course, the most important reason is

the fact that dance is a powerful tool in spiritual warfare.

God wants to use us to crush the enemy underneath our

feet: *"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet"* (Rom. 16:20a).

Prayer Dance for the Nations

It's a privilege to get to pray for the nations through dance. Many of the

psalms give us an example of prophetic prayer for peoples and nations of the world.

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May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you. May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth (Psalm 67:3-4).

As worshipers we have been called to lead the nations into God's presence, to adore Him. We also have a calling to lift up the nations to God on the wings of prayer. Once I was invited to dance for an annual independence celebration of Finland at a party where all the war veterans of Lapland had been invited as special guests. I danced an intercessory dance for Finland to a well-known music piece called "Finlandia Hymn." I was really moved when I saw the Holy Spirit leading these war veterans into prayer as I was dancing. Dance can also be a tool to inspire and lead others to pray.

Prophetic Dance

In the same way as intercessory dance, prophetic dance can be used in all kinds of situations. Prophetic dance and intercessory dance go pretty much hand in hand in any case. Actually, they are so closely related that it's often hard to tell when one ends and the other starts. Earlier in this chapter I was telling about how in the dance course in Australia we often prayed for people with movement, and during those times the prophetic was often released.

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Intercessory Dance and Prophetic Dance

Through prophetic dance we can proclaim the truth and the will of God to individuals, people groups, and nations. In the spring of 2009 I was in a conference called, "Break Forth" in Tampere, Finland. One of the speakers there was Marc Dupont, the same pastor who released me into the ministry of worship dance almost ten years earlier. I hadn't seen him all these years, but he remembered me and asked me to dance a prophetic dance related to a prophetic word he was about to share. The idea for the dance was based on Second Samuel 5,

where God instructs David and his armies to move on when they hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees. Pastor Marc had chosen an instrumental music piece for the dance. I improvised the whole dance because I didn't get a chance to hear the music beforehand. My legs were literally vibrating before I started to dance, not because I was nervous but because the presence of the Holy Spirit was so strong. When I started dancing, I felt God pouring out His heart through my movements. I didn't have to try to "make up" a dance; I just let the Holy Spirit lead. This was one of those experiences when I felt like I was doing exactly what God created me for...sensing the presence of Heaven as eternity touches this moment. It's hard to describe it with words. The dance started as an intercessory dance for revival in Finland and at some point changed into a prophetic declaration. This was

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another example of intercession and prophetic dance supporting one another.

In the same way as in intercessory dance, people don't even need to see the prophetic dance for it to bring a shift to the atmosphere. The word of God, whether declared through words, movement, or other creative expression, will always do what it was sent for.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it (Isaiah 55:10-11).

Even though prophetic dance doesn't have to be seen by people, God sometimes makes that happen too. The prophetic word I was asked to proclaim by dancing was both seen and heard all over Finland. The meeting was filmed and shown on Finnish TV several times. This way the prophetic word was repeat-

edly declared.

Examples of

Prophetic Dance in the Bible

The prophets in the Old Testament often used movement and drama when they brought words from

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the Lord (see Gen. 30:37-39; Jer. 13; 18–19). One dancing prophet who was named in the early pages of the Bible was Miriam.

Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing (Exodus 15:20).

Prophetic dance is also found in First Samuel 18:

When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tam-

bourines and lutes. As they danced, they sang:

“Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (1 Samuel 18:6-7).

At this point, David had killed a lion, bear, and

Goliath. In this prophetic dance and song, the women

of Israel were crowning David for defeating tens of thousands. It was a prophetic declaration of what God would still do through David.

Another example about dancing prophets is in

First Samuel 10. I wrote about this in Chapter 4. As

a recap, in this story Saul meets a group of prophets

who are in such an intense state of prophesying that

it could be described as a spiritual ecstasy. The word

that’s used in the original Hebrew text for this kind of

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state of prophecy includes the meaning of movement

and dance. Another similar example is found in First

Samuel 19:20-23. This time Saul sends his men after

David, but they run into a group of prophets who are

in the same kind of ecstatic state of prophesying, and the men of Saul end up joining them. After this Saul himself decides to go after David but ends up prophesying as well.

Prophetic Dance in the Light of the New Testament

The New Testament exhorts us to desire the gift of prophecy:

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1).

Prophecy is primarily about hearing the heartbeat

of God and expressing it. It is about being in tune with the Holy Spirit as He shows us the heart of the Father and teaches us to communicate it to others. In

the same way we can interpret the heart of God with our words, we can do it with movements (and through other creative expressions, like visual arts, poetry, music, etc.). Prophetic dance should follow the same guidelines as prophecy in general. According to the

New Testament, prophecy is meant for “*strengthening, encouragement and comfort*” (1 Cor. 14:3b) All prophecy

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should also glorify Jesus, just like it says in the Book of Revelation: “*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” (Rev. 19:10b).

When we get more deeply rooted and grounded in

Christ, we start maturing also in the prophetic. As we

fall more in love with Jesus, feeling His heart and hearing His voice becomes natural for us.

The same as with intercessory dance, there is no

formula for prophetic dance. God can speak through

either a choreographed dance or a spontaneous dance.

The most important thing is that the dancer/dancers

have their hearts open to God and let the Holy Spirit

communicate through their movements.

Testimonies About Healings,

Salvations, and Encounters

With God Through Intercessory

Dance and Prophetic Dance

In the spring of 2010, I was on a mission trip in

Bosnia and Herzegovina. I and two other girls from our

team got to visit one lady who was hospitalized. This elderly lady had not been able to walk for a long time. Her legs were swollen and dark purple. She was very excited when we came to pray for her, and I felt prompted to

start dancing a “happy feet” dance over her. It was quite unlike any other dance I had danced before. I felt like

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God wanted me to release the joy of Heaven to her legs

and feet.

Before we even finished praying, she all of a sudden

got off her bed and started walking all by herself. Her legs changed color from deep purple to her normal skin

color right in front of our eyes! She also got her sight back. Her eyes had been so bad that she had not been

able to read for a long time. Now she grabbed one of

the medicine bottles on her table and was able to read

the small print on the back of it. Afterward we heard

that one of the doctors was so amazed that he asked if

we could pray for the other patients too, but by then we were already on our way to the airport. Even though we

were not able to go back, I am sure this testimony will open more doors for

the local believers to go and pray in the hospitals.

Another funny story about releasing the Kingdom of God through dance happened in the spring of 2010 in Croatia. I felt God speaking to me about the importance of investing into children in Croatia.

In the first meeting, I realized that they were having a separate children's meeting in one of the back rooms.

I sneaked in there and was surrounded by about 30 kids who were sharing testimonies of what Jesus had done for them.

All of a sudden I found myself raising my hand and asking if it would be okay if I blessed the kids. Then I heard myself saying that I could dance to a song that

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was about releasing God's love and joy to these children.

They got very excited. The only problem was that I had

absolutely no idea what I was going to do, but as soon as I took the first step and opened my mouth, the song and the dance started flowing out. There was a literal outburst of heavenly joy among the children as they started

encountering the presence of God!

The spring of 2011 I got to go on a mission trip to Mexico City. One day when we were out in the local neighborhood with a few of my friends, we met an elderly man at a street corner. We stopped and asked if

he would like us to pray for him. He said yes and told us that he had a lot of pain in his legs because of osteoporosis. After we prayed for him, his face lit up and he told us that all his pain disappeared. He was so excited that he asked if we could follow him to his house and pray for his wife as well, so we got to meet his wife, who had a very similar condition.

After a quick prayer, I felt like my friend and I should dance over them. The couple joined our dance spontaneously and started skipping up and down. The woman

wasn't only healed of the pain in her legs, but her hearing also got a lot better, and both of them wanted to

receive Jesus as their Savior.

God wants to move, not only on mission trips but right where we live. During the spring of 2011, I was in Redding, California, at Leader's Advance, which is a conference where leaders who are connected with

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Bethel come together from all over the world. During this conference, one of the pastors, Theresa Dedmon, taught a seminar on prophetic arts and invited some of us students to help her do that. I was asked to demonstrate healing and prophetic dance.

When I walked up front, I felt a funny tingling on my feet and asked if anyone had pain in their feet.

(Sometimes when God gives us a word of knowledge,

we can physically feel it in our bodies.) Two ladies came up front, and I got to dance over them, releasing God's healing presence through dance. The pain left from both of these ladies' feet, and one of the ladies also received tremendous inner healing. Afterward one man came up

to me and told me that he had not had feeling in his

toes for a long time and during the meeting, the sense of feeling came back.

During the summer of 2011, I was in the city of

Tampere in Finland, my home country. I was teaching

a seminar on intercessory dance at a conference called

Break Forth, organized by Nokia Mission. I was shar-

ing some testimonies of God healing people through

dance ministry. Then I asked people to partner up and

practice ministering to each other by dancing. One man had a big operation two years earlier and had lost all the sense of feeling on his chest. Now, during the dance ministry time, the feeling came back. He was

freaking out, in a positive way, when all of a sudden he felt the sweaty T-shirt against his chest. What a funny sensation after not feeling anything on his chest for

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two years. He was so excited about his healing that he

shared his testimony in an interview that was published in the next newspaper of Nokia Mission.

E n d n o t e s

1. Dutch Sheets, *Intercessory Prayer* (Ventura, CA: Regal From Gospel Light, 1996), 52.

2. Rosalyn Smaill, *Dance—: What does the Bible say about it?* (Wellington, New Zealand: Christian Dance Fellowship New Zealand Inc., 1992), 10.

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8

Stepping Into

Our True Identity

Learning to Live

as a Son or a Daughter

Learning to live as a dearly loved child of God is

such a priceless lesson. When we abide in that place of being saturated by the love of the Father, we find ourselves living in true freedom: the kind of freedom where there is no pressure to perform. Experiencing Papa God's love is the basis to finding freedom to express ourselves in all creative ways.

From the very beginning God's heart has been

longing for intimacy with us in the Father-daughter or

Father-son relationship. In Jeremiah 3:19, God says:

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I myself said, "How gladly would I treat you like sons and give you a desirable land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation." I thought you would call Me "Father" and not turn away from following Me.

God is longing for us to call Him Father. He is

longing for us to get the revelation about His Father's heart so we can receive His love and live as true sons

and daughters. As a matter of fact, the whole of creation is longing for the full manifestation of that revelation:

The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was

subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom

of the children of God (Romans 8:19-21).

In the spring of 2011, I was asked to dance at an event called Arts in Motion in Redding, California.

One of the students of BSSM (Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry) filmed my dance and put it on YouTube without me knowing about it. When I heard it was there, I went to see it and noticed that my father, who lives in Finland with my mom, had already watched it. He had been one of the first ones, if not the very first person, to see it. He had written under the video clip: "I like it, and I think your Dad does too."

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–Your dad.” My father’s mother language is Finnish, but he had written his comment in English so that all my friends could understand it as well. I was moved to tears by his words and by this simple expression of him being proud of me.

You need to understand that in the Finnish culture, at least during these past few decades, it has not been very common for parents and especially for fathers to

express their love and appreciation with words. There

has been a strong unwritten belief that children become proud if they get too much positive feedback. This nasty lie from the enemy has been causing a lot of damage in

children’s self-image and self-esteem. Part of the problem is that many parents have low self-esteem: they don’t

think they are anything special, so how could they be-

lieve their children would be any better? This twisted

mindset goes to the extent that it would be considered

pride to affirm your own children. Of course, there have always been exceptions, and I am happy to say that the

culture is changing as many parents are starting to learn the value of verbal affirmation.

When I grew up, I was one of those kids who did not

receive a whole lot of verbal affirmation, especially not from my father. I don't say this to blame him. He didn't get too much verbal affirmation when he grew up, so he

never learned how to give it. I always knew he loved me, and he showed his love and care through many other

ways, such as by providing everything I needed. But I

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grew up with a longing in my heart to hear him tell me that he loved me and was proud of me.

With this background story, you probably understand better why I was so moved by the little comment that my father wrote under the dance video of me on

YouTube. I am very proud of my father. He has grown so

much in his communication skills as he has let the Holy Spirit teach him. When I read the comment, I had this

irrational-sounding thought: "I don't care if no one else in this world likes me or likes what I do. My dad likes me, and he is proud of me, and that's enough

to make

me happy.”

Afterward I was trying to process this feeling, and

I realized how powerful it is to learn to live as a dearly loved daughter. God wants our identity to be rooted

in being a dearly loved daughter or son of God. He is

a Father who lavishes His love on us continuously. We

need to know that our heavenly Father is comment-

ing on all our creative expressions with the proud

words, “I like it!” He likes what we create, simply be-

cause we are His children. We belong to Him. Just

like John said:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on

us, that we should be called children of God! And

that is what we are! (1 John 3:1a).

When we really know who we are and start living

according to our God-given identity, nothing can stop

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us. Knowing that you are loved makes you confident, courageous, and creative. I believe love is the most powerful force that can empower us.

Too often people do creative things as well as ministry things because they want to feel loved and accepted.

They try to earn love by doing things. This seems to be especially true in the world of creative arts. In the Kingdom of God, it should be the other way around. We should continuously be so filled with the Father's love that we can't keep it all in. We have to pour it out and express it in all creative ways; otherwise we will burst because we are so full of love.

Body Image and

Taking Care of Our Bodies

As a dancer, it's quite common to come across questions about body image. In the first chapter, I told how I grew up as a gymnast. As a young girl, I had friends who suffered from eating disorders. Many of those sicknesses started when a coach told a young girl that she was too fat. And even if they were not told so to their face, they felt an unspoken expectation to be a certain shape.

It was by the grace of God that I never had any personal struggles with eating disorders. I was geneti-

cally tiny anyway, and my personal gymnastic coach was very laid back when it came to eating habits. He never gave me any specific diets to follow. He did

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occasionally tell me not to eat so much candy or at least to hide it from the other coaches when we were on competition trips, which I found quite humorous. I had quite a big sweet tooth, so the former advice was actually very sensible.

I never had a weight problem. I did so much physi-

cal training every day that it seemed like I could eat almost anything and not gain weight. I think the first time I started paying a little attention to what I was eating was after I stopped my career as a competitive gymnast.

Still, I never counted calories or went on any strict diets. Even though I didn't have any major struggles in

this area, God started gently teaching me about taking

care of my body. The Bible tells us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of

the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

As a dancer and especially as a worship dancer, I

have the responsibility of taking care of this temple of the Holy Spirit. For a dancer, your body is the main instrument you use in worship. This doesn't mean that

you need to be a certain shape or size to be a worship

dancer—not at all—but it does mean that we need to

learn to take care of our bodies. Part of this is purely practical discipline: eating healthily, sleeping enough,

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and exercising enough. There is plenty of great teach-

ing material on all this, so I will not go into more detail about that, but I believe one of the first steps in taking care of our bodies is to learn to love our bodies the way God loves them. Psalm 139 says:

For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because

I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:13-16).

You truly are fearfully and wonderfully made, inside and out. You are His piece of art. No one has the right to criticize what God has beautifully created.

Yet, O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, You are the potter; we are all the work of Your hand (Isaiah 64:8).

But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?

“Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why did you make me like this?’” (Romans 9:20).

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You turn things upside down, as if the potter were thought to be like the clay! Shall what is formed say to him who formed it, “He did not make me”? Can the pot say of the potter, “He knows nothing”? (Isaiah 29:16).

When we learn to value our bodies like God values them, all of a sudden it becomes much easier to treat our bodies with love and care.

Holy Spirit Is the Perfect Coach

Looking back in my life, I realize that I have learned so much about the role of the Holy Spirit as my Guide and “Coach” from my gymnastics coach. My earthly coach was by no means perfect, but some of his coaching methods were very much Kingdom of God style. He never forced or pressured me to do anything. He was very encouraging, and he communicated clearly if he thought it would be time to start practicing a new trick.

Whenever he suggested that I could start practicing a particular trick, I knew that he knew I had the capacity to do it without getting injured. I knew that he knew I was ready for it.

He also liked it when I initiated the learning process and told him if I wanted to start practicing something new. If he knew that I wasn't ready for something I wanted to do, he told me to wait and gave me exercises that developed my skills so I could finally

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do the particular trick without hurting myself. It was teamwork and co-laboring at its finest.

Whenever I was trying something new, he would stand right next to me, ready to catch me, whether I was in danger of losing my balance on the beam or from the uneven bars or something else. I remember the thrill of doing a back flip on the high balance beam for the first time. I also remember that even though I had butterflies in my stomach, I didn't feel panicky because my coach was right there with me, and he did catch me several times when I would have oth-

erwise landed on my head or missed the beam. I could trust my coach. I knew he had my best interests in mind and I knew he knew what he was doing. I loved the thrill of overcoming my fears with his encouragement in a safe environment.

On the contrary, I didn't have the same trust in some other coaches. When I was in high school, I was part of the National Gymnastics Team of Finland for the juniors. We had some training camps where I was totally horrified and literally counting down the hours and minutes to when I would get to go home. One of the teaching methods that some of the national coaches used was a discipline called "food tricks." What this meant was that everyone had to do the same new trick or tricks they randomly decided. The consequence for not doing it was that you wouldn't get dinner, even if the reason

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was that you were too scared or your skill level wasn't high enough to get the trick done.

I remember one specific time when I was standing on the high balance beam and shaking with fear. We had been told that the “food trick” for that rehearsal was a back handspring, followed by a layout. I had never done that by myself on the balance beam. I was thinking that these coaches didn’t even know my skill level well enough to know if I would miss the beam and break my neck. They stood so far away that they wouldn’t be able to help if something went wrong. I felt like they wouldn’t actually care if I broke my neck. I didn’t trust them at all. I wasn’t scared of missing the meal. I knew I wouldn’t starve to death, but I was afraid of the humiliation of being the one who didn’t make it.

Of course the situation was not always so black and white. I did have some challenging times with my personal coach, and I did have some good days with the national coaches as well, but I wanted to paint this picture and show you the contrast of these methods.

Learning to trust the Holy Spirit as your personal coach is so important. He is the perfect coach. He has your

best interests in mind. He is such a great encourager. He knows you personally. He knows when you are ready for

new steps of faith. He is right there with you and always catches you when you fall. He is the One who helps you

to step into your true identity as a son or a daughter. He helps you to start seeing yourself the way He sees you.

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He sets you free to express yourself in all creative ways and to move joyfully forward in this dance of life. He is the best coach in every area of your life. He is also the best dance coach!

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9

A Functional Dance Group

in a Local Church

Moving Forward With Prayer

Because dance has been misused so much in the past, we need wisdom to bring dance back to churches in a way that pleases God. The most important key in this process is prayer. If you are dreaming of starting a dance group in your church, the best preparation plans start with prayer. We can potentially bring more problems than solutions if we try to give birth to something prematurely. Symbolically said, “the child of dance” can get aborted if it’s forced to come out before its time.

The enemy is not thrilled when dance is being restored to its rightful place for worshiping God and

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releasing His Kingdom. That’s why there can be a lot of spiritual warfare and resistance, especially at the early stage. When we move forward with prayer and keep on

staying in tune with God, we can make sure that we proceed in His timing.

Prayer is crucial, not just in the beginning but also continuously. I heard one Christian dance teacher advise that when it comes to dance ministry, there should be 70 percent prayer and 30 percent dance. Of course this is not a law, but I have realized that seeking God's face positions everything in the right direction quicker than anything else.

When I lived in Australia, I got to lead a worship dance team in our college's morning chapel meetings.

During that season, I learned how important it is for the leader to be covering the dancers in prayer—to pray for them and to pray with them. Normally we danced in those worship meetings only once a week, but we would gather twice a week to get ourselves ready to do that. One gathering was specifically for prayer, and the other one was for creating some new dance material and for learning to move together as a group led by the Holy Spirit. Prayer gave a solid foundation for everything we did.

Finding a Vision and an Action Plan

Dance groups can serve many different purposes.

This is why it is important to know what you are going

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after, what your vision is, and the strategy of how to get there. Of course we should seek God in all this, but He rarely gives us a ready and detailed action plan. He could do that too, but I think He enjoys letting us be part of the process of creating and designing it. We have the

privilege of dreaming and planning together with God,

“For we are God’s fellow workers...” (1 Cor. 3:9).

When I speak of a vision, I’m referring to the goal that you want to reach. It could be, for example, to set people free to worship God, to bring healing, to reach non-Christians, etc. If the dance group is under a local church, it is important that the vision of the dance group is supporting the vision of the church. Communication with church leaders is crucial. In this way we can prevent misunderstandings and make sure we are under the covering of our leaders. Writing down our vision can help to communicate it clearly to others.

Then the Lord answered me and said: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may

run who reads it” (Habakkuk 2:2 NKJV).

When we have our vision written down, we can also remind one another why we do what we do. A clear vision helps to give us perseverance while facing challenging circumstances.

Every dance group is different. Even though the vision could be similar, the strategies of getting there can

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be extremely diverse. All dancers come from different backgrounds. Everyone has his or her own strengths and weaknesses and preferences in dance styles. All these

factors have an effect on how the group works best as a team. It’s always good to look for common ground and

to use the strengths of the dancers. The most important thing is not that everyone has a common dance style but rather finding a common vision and working in unity

toward that.

Who Is Going to Dance

in a Dance Group?

One common question when it comes to dance min-

istry is, how do you choose dancers for the team? I don't have an exhaustive answer for that, but I believe prayer is the key yet again. Even Jesus spent time in prayer before choosing His 12 closest disciples (see Luke 6:12-

16). God wants to give us wisdom for making choices that are aligned with His heart.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him (James 1:5).

I'm convinced that God wants to set everyone free

to express worship with everything he or she is. There

is a time and a place for everyone to dance. It's important that we make room for this because God is on a

move to set His *whole* Bride free to worship. However,

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not everyone is meant to be on a worship dance team.

God has given some people a calling and anointing to

draw others into His presence through dance. They are not in any way holier or better than others; they just have been designed and appointed by God for this specific task. The following thoughts concern the kind of worship team that ministers by dancing on stage or in a place up front where they can lead others into God's presence by their worship.

In some cases it's obvious that the person is called for the ministry of worship dance. The most important thing is that the dancer has a heart of worship, loves God wholeheartedly, and wants to draw others into His

presence. Of course, we can't rate people's heart condition; only God knows the hearts of people. Besides, all of us are works in progress. What is relevant is that worship dancers have humble hearts before the Lord and

are willing to let the Holy Spirit work in their hearts and lives. One good indicator about anyone's love for

the Lord is his or her love for other people. Jesus Himself said:

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another (John 13:35).

One of the ways love is manifested is by a willingness to serve—both to serve God and serve people. Paul

exhorted us:

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Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than your-selves. Each of you should look not only to your

own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ

Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not con-

sider equality with God something to be grasped,

but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature

of a servant, being made in human likeness. And

being found in appearance as a man, He humbled

Himself and became obedient to death— even

death on a cross! (Philippians 2:3-8)

We should have the same heart of love, whether we are dancing, piling up chairs, or cleaning the toilets.

Another aspect when choosing dancers for a worship dance team is sufficient level of skill in dance technique.

We don't just randomly take people without any experi-

ence or training to sing or play instruments in a worship team. The same common sense should be used when

choosing dancers. I don't mean that all dancers should

be professional prima ballerinas. They should, however, know how to use their bodies in a way that's not distracting but rather turns everyone's focus to God.

I can say from my own experience that taking

dance technique classes is very beneficial, but the

Holy Spirit is by far the best dance teacher. I know

it's not possible for everyone to take dance classes for various practical reasons. That is why I would not make

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it a requirement for anyone who is a worshiper from his or her heart and is working on growing in his or her gift of dance using whatever resources are available. But it is good to remember that God deserves our best. Even David didn't want to give God an offering that cost him nothing (see 1 Chron. 21:24). In the same way, we can, in a sense, pay a price for making

God's praise excellent by developing our gifts, such as by taking dance classes.

Just to clarify, the advice above is for worship

team members. In my opinion, the ideal setting would

be that there was so much space in church buildings

(for example, in the back, in the aisles, or on the sides) that everyone who wants to could dance to the Lord

without being a distraction to others. I also think

that during congregational worship, there are mo-

ments when it would be appropriate for the worship

leader to encourage and invite everyone to dance. It is really powerful and freeing when the whole church is

dancing together, especially in times of celebration or spiritual warfare.

Having said this, I want to add that we should

never put God in a box. Lack of training does not hin-

der God from using anyone. He wants us to release

freedom through movement in worship. I have seen

God powerfully use little kids who danced spontane-

ously. They had no training whatsoever, only a sincere

and thankful heart. We should never try to restrict or

limit the way God works. That is why it is so important

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to constantly stay sensitive to the Holy Spirit and to do everything in love.

Cooperating With the Worship Team

I already emphasized how important it is that dance doesn't become a distraction. One way to prevent that and to prevent conflicts is that the dance team works

closely with the worship leader and the musicians. Dancers are not trying to come and take over but rather serve the music team and the congregation. Clear communication, both before and during the worship service, gives a healthy foundation for cooperation. It is also helpful to discuss all practical things, such as the use of space, before the meeting starts.

It is important to have clarity about who is leading the dance team and how much authority the dance leader has when it comes to collaborating dance in corporate worship. Some worship leaders like to plan, at least loosely, the outline for the service. In this case they might want to know (or even decide) which songs the dancers will be dancing to. Other worship leaders might like to run the meeting more spontaneously and don't really mind when the dancers decide to dance.

Both of these styles can work well, but it is important to know what the worship leader expects from the dance team. Mutual trust and understanding can be built by working together. There can be times when the worship leader gives full freedom to the dance leader to

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direct the dancers to dance whenever they feel the Holy Spirit leading them. However, cooperation is always

beneficial, no matter how much each party trusts the other to do things on their own. We never see the full picture on our own.

In practice, too much communication during wor-

ship can be distracting. That's why the more things are settled before the meeting starts, the better. Still, there can be situations when the worship leader needs to be

able to give a signal to the dancers, even in the middle of worship, for instance, if the worship leader feels like the dancers are needed on stage immediately to bring a

breakthrough, or if he or she feels like the stage needs to be cleared out for a specific moment of silence. It would be great if the dance team leader could

be, at least once in a while, within range of eye contact with the worship leader in case he or she needs to signal the dancers to come on stage or to go off stage.

Ideally it would be amazing if the dancers could sometimes rehearse together with the worship band. Of course both the musicians and the dancers need their own separate practices as well, but the more we work together, the easier it becomes to flow in unity.

How to Prepare as a Team for Worship Dance

Once again the number one answer is—surprise, surprise—prayer. When I talk about prayer, I do not

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necessarily mean spending lots of time in fiery intercession but rather just soaking in the presence of God. When we spend time in God's presence as a group, He tenderizes our hearts so that we become more sensitive to the Holy Spirit and toward each other. That is what

creates true unity. Psalm 133 says, “*How good and pleasant it is when brothers [and sisters] live together in unity!*”

(Ps.133:1).

The last verse of the same psalm continues that

that’s where “*the Lord bestows His blessing, even life forevermore.*” God bestows or even commands blessing in the place of unity.

In addition to preparing our hearts and our spirits,

it’s also important to prepare our bodies. In order to

keep up and develop our dance technique, it’s advis-

able that dancers take regular dance classes. It’s great if the group can run their own technique classes, but if that’s not possible, the dancers can always take classes independently. Every dancer knows his or her own

body best and knows what kind of technique classes he

or she needs for keeping up and developing his or her

technique.

What is even more important than taking tech-

nique classes is that the team takes time regularly to

dance together in worship (outside of public meetings).

This is especially important during the start phase of a team. There is no formula of how to do this either. Every team has to figure out what works best for them. When

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I studied in Australia, I got to experiment in the safe environment of our school different ways of using dance in a corporate worship setting. I got to see what works and what does not. Even though some of these principles can vary a little depending on the culture you are in, I hope my observations and experiences will be helpful for worship dance team leaders.

Spontaneous and

Choreographed Dance

When I led a worship dance team in Australia, I

used most of our rehearsal times for letting the dancers improvise in small groups. The more the dancers dance

together, the better they learn each other's "movement

language." This makes improvising in worship as a team

much easier because the dancers don't need to pay so

much attention to each other anymore. This way they

can keep their focus where it belongs during worship: on Jesus and on worshiping Him.

I had the advantage that all the dancers in the wor-

ship team were students at the same dance school, so we were already used to dancing together. When the dancers know each other and each other's dance styles, it's easier to use more group improvisation in public worship meetings.

When our dance team danced in worship services,

we used both choreographed and improvised dance.

Sometimes we chose one of the dancers to lead the

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improvised parts and we followed the leader, either

mimicking the leader's moves all at the same time or doing the movements in canon or just picking up similar

shapes and rhythms. For all of this to work, it requires both practice and the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

In our rehearsal times, we also made up short

pieces of choreography. We tried to keep them simple

and adaptable so we could use them for several differ-

ent worship songs if necessary. When we were creating

those little choreographies, we often used a Bible verse or the words, melody, or rhythm of a worship song as

a stimulus to inspire the movements. The more the

dancers themselves are part of the process of creating

the dance pieces, the better they internalize and take

ownership of the choreography. That is why I tried to

include as many dancers as possible in the actual creation process.

Some dancers love to improvise while others feel more comfortable dancing choreographed pieces. Neither way is better or holier than the other. We experienced that sometimes the Holy Spirit moved powerfully through spontaneous dance and sometimes through choreographed dance. That is why we tried to use both

styles intertwined together. Even if we prefer one style to another, it is good to remember that worship is not primarily for our enjoyment but for God's. As long as God

gets blessed, it doesn't matter that much what structures or styles we use.

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Less Is Sometimes More

I have noticed that the more dancers there are dancing at the same time, the less movement there should be.

If the dance group is big and there are many different things happening at the same time, the big picture can

look too busy and restless. For the same reason, when working with a bigger dance team, it is preferable to use more synchronized movements. The saying “less is more” applies also for dance. The movements have more meaning and significance when there is not too much happening at the same time.

Even when dancing with a smaller group, it is good to remember to avoid being too excessive with movement. Considering the entity of a corporate worship time, it is helpful to have moments or periods of time when there is no movement or dance at all. Of course,

the key for breakthrough is not the amount of dance but being sensitive to the Holy Spirit. There could be times when God is directing the dancers to dance throughout the entire worship time, but we should not consider that a norm.

When a new dance group is just starting, it is easy to

get so excited about this new ministry that the dancers want to dance all the time. However, in corporate worship settings, dance tends to work in a similar way to a solo instrument. It’s lovely to hear the oboe or flute once in a while, but if it’s being played nonstop through the whole worship time, it can get a bit annoying. It is good

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to remind ourselves that as worship dancers, we are first and foremost called to bless God but also to help others to enter into worship.

Purity and Considering

Different Cultures

When traveling around the world, I have realized how there are very different customs in different cultures. There can also be huge differences in church cultures even in the same country. It's a good idea to consider these cultural differences when starting a dance group, especially when it comes to dance styles and the way the dancers dress. It is not a bad thing to have different customs and styles; quite the opposite.

God has created us all to be unique and different. Versatility is a blessing.

Much more important than the style we use is the purity of our hearts. The condition of our heart shines through us whenever we dance or express ourselves, whether we want it to or not. Our expressions reflect what's on the inside of us. However, a person whose mind is corrupted sees in a distorted or perverted way

even what is done in purity.

To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted (Titus 1:15).

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Uncleanness is in the people's hearts and minds.

We can only have control over our own heart condition and our own thought life. That is why we don't need to feel responsible for everyone's thoughts and responses.

Having said that, we should still lovingly consider our brothers and sisters in everything we do—how we move,

how we dress, etc.—especially when ministering in different cultures and churches.

“Everything is permissible”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible”—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others (1 Corinthians 10:23-24).

Make up your mind not to put any stumbling

block or obstacle in your brother's way (Romans 14:13b).

You, my brothers [and sisters] , were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the

sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

The entire law is summed up in a single command:

“Love your neighbor as yourself” (Galatians

5:13-14).

Obviously these Bible verses do not talk directly

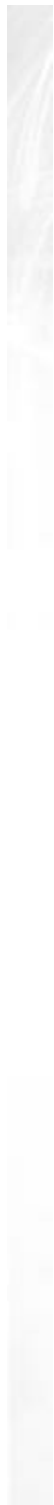
about dance, but they fit into this context very well. We can never totally prevent people from getting offended, but we can lovingly consider their cultural background

in advance. We should also use common sense. It might

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not be the best idea to send a youth group to do a hip-

hop dance into a traditional, conservative church, nor

to send an elderly ladies' Hebrew circle dance group into an evangelistic youth event.

Having said all this, I want to emphasize that we

should not be bound by earthly traditions in a wrong

way. The Kingdom culture of Heaven overrules every-

thing else. God likes creating new things. It's for our own benefit to learn to be easily conveyed in His creative

stream. Otherwise we might get a huge culture shock

when we get to Heaven!

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10

Worship as a Priority

I want to return to the baseline of this whole book:

God deserves all our worship!

When the disciples started joyfully worshiping and

praising God, the Pharisees got offended by this and told Jesus to shut them up. Jesus replied, *“If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out”* (Luke 19:40b).

I have made up my mind that I will not let the stones do my part of worship!

Worship as a Starting Point

and the Destination

We have been created to worship God. If we don't worship God, we will inevitably look for a

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substitute—something else that we will start worshipping. God's command for us to worship Him is actually very loving. When we worship Him, we experience the deepest joy that exists.

Worship is the destination for our whole lives. We

lead people to Jesus so they will find a purpose for their lives in a loving

relationship with God. Worship is an

expression of this love for the Lord. That's why worship should also be the starting point for all missions and

evangelism. If we don't have a heartfelt communion

with God in worship, how can we lead anyone else into

that place?

God deserves worship from all the nations and peo-

ple groups. That's the other reason why we lead people

to Jesus and do missions and evangelism. Worship is simply due to God. We know that one day everyone will see

the glory of God and worship Him:

For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall give

praise to God" (Romans 14:11 NASB).

What a privilege it is to already worship God now,

offering the gift of worship voluntarily.

God wants to open our eyes to see His glory in many

wonderful ways right now during our earthly walk with

Him. One of the first times God opened my spiritual

senses to see a glimpse of His glory happened during my Discipleship Training School in Norway in 1999. I had

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been longing for a personal encounter with the glory of God, even though I didn't really even know what I was

asking for. One day, just before our class was about to start, our school leader came to pray for me, and I had an encounter with God unlike anything else I had experienced before. I saw a vision of Jesus and afterward I realized what I saw was very similar to the description in Revelation:

*His head and hair were white like wool, as white
as snow, and His eyes were like blazing fire. His
feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and
His voice was like the sound of rushing waters....
His face was like the sun shining in all its bril-
liance (Revelation 1:14-16).*

When John had this vision, he fell to the ground as though dead. Of course my experience wasn't otherwise comparable to John's, but I could easily identify with his initial reaction. The glory of God was so bright that at first I couldn't even look in His direction, and I also fell to the ground "*as though dead.*" Afterward my school leader told me that even though he didn't see anything, he also sensed God's holiness in such an intense way that he couldn't even lay his hand on me.

This whole experience was so penetrating that I will never forget it. His holiness and magnificence was so piercing that I felt physical pain just by looking at Him.

At the same time, the love in His eyes was so irresistibly compelling that I couldn't have looked anywhere else.

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He didn't say many words, but I felt like every word He said contained more than all the sermons I had heard

and all the books that I had read put together.

At that moment I realized in a whole new way why

God deserves all of our praise and worship and why the

four living creatures worship Him day and night, and

the 24 elders constantly bow down and lay their crowns

before the throne of God (see Rev. 4:8-11). In the presence of God, worship and praise are an automatic reac-

tion and the only appropriate approach.

I believe God wants to open our eyes, and all our

spiritual senses, to experience more of His reality. But even in those moments when we don't feel anything, we

can know with certainty that God is worthy of all our worship.

Though you have not seen Him, you love Him;

and even though you do not see Him now, you

believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy (1 Peter 1:8).

Expressing Worship

I often hear statements like, “Worship is a heart at-

titude.” I totally agree with this, but it is also true that the attitude needs to be expressed. If we claim to love someone but we never express it in any way, this kind of love is worthless. Love needs to be communicated and

expressed. Different expressions of worship are there to

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expose (in a positive sense) the attitude of our hearts to God and to communicate our love to Him.

In the Old Testament, there are seven Hebrew words

for praise. These words give us a great picture of how our worship can be expressed in different ways.

1. *Towdah* (8426) describes the sacrifice of praise, often referring to singing and extension of

hands (for example in Psalm 50:23).

2. *Zamar* (2167) describes praising the Lord with striking musical instruments with fingers...

celebrating in song and music (for example in Psalm 108:1).

3. *Shabach* (7623) describes praising the Lord with a shout or a loud voice (for example in Psalm 147:12).

4. *Barak* (1288) describes praising the Lord by kneeling or bowing (for example in Psalm 95:6).

5. *Yadah* (3034) describes praising the Lord with hands and hand movements (for example in Psalm 9:1).

6. *Halal* (1984) describes praising the Lord by celebrating, shining forth, and acting clamorously

foolish. It is praise that's expressed with the

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whole body (for example in Psalm 150, 113,

104, 105, 106).

7. *Tehillah* (8416) describes the praise from your spirit...a hymn of praise (for example in Psalm

34:1). *Tehillah* is derived from *halal* (1984), referring to praise that's expressed with the

whole being.

It's interesting that five out of the seven words for praise include movement and body language. I believe this shows how much God enjoys worship that's expressed with our whole being.

Intimacy With God Through Worship

Our worship and praise take us into the place of intimacy with God. We have the privilege of drawing near to God with praise:

Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name (Psalm 100:4).

In the Book of Ezekiel (44:10-16), there is a story about certain Levites who went astray and wandered from God into worshiping idols. As a consequence, they were not allowed to draw near to God in worship. God

said of them:

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They are not to come near to serve Me as priests

or come near any of My holy things or My most

holy offerings.... Yet I will put them in charge of

the duties of the temple and all the work that is to be done in it (Ezekiel 44:13-14).

These Levites were restricted to serve only the

building and the people. They were still servants of the temple, but they no longer had intimacy with God and

the privilege of worshiping Him.

There was another group of Levites, descendants of

Zadok, who had faithfully worshiped God through the

difficult times. God gave them the privilege of drawing near to Him. Their worship literally opened the way

for them to come into the presence of God. God said

of them:

They alone are to enter My sanctuary; they alone

are to come near My table to minister before

Me... (Ezekiel 44:16).

Jesus made the way for us to enter into the Holy of Holies through His death and resurrection. The curtain of the temple (that separated the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies) was torn in two from top to bottom the moment Jesus gave up His spirit at the cross (see Matt. 27:51). We have been given an open invitation to step into the presence of God in worship. That's why it's important to make sure we don't let anything get in the

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way of our worship. Our first calling is not to be servants, but worshipers.

Worshippers' Time Is Never Wasted

When I did the school of worship in Jerusalem, I got to dance in two musicals. One of them was based on the story of Ruth (in the Old Testament), and the musical culminated in the redemption that Jesus created for us. I danced in quite a few of the scenes, and we practiced the

musical long and hard. The musical was performed in the same desert through which Naomi and Ruth traveled when returning from the land of Moab back to Bethlehem.

This desert was, of course, an ideal location for a musical based on this story, but in practice it made the rehearsal process quite demanding. Closer to the actual performance dates, most of our rehearsals were held there. We were sweating for hours under the burning sun of the desert. Before every rehearsal, we gathered together to pray, dedicating the whole project to Him.

The morning of the last dress rehearsal day, I woke up feeling awful. I had a high fever, and I realized there was no way I could get out of bed, let alone jump and

dance in the desert. I felt devastated. *This is the worst timing ever to get sick!* I complained in my thoughts. *All that hard work was just a waste of time!* Straightaway I heard God's gentle voice speaking to my heart, "What

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do you mean it was a waste of time? You worshiped

Me and brought joy to My heart every time you were

rehearsing.”

I was stunned. For the first time in my life, I realized how incredible it is that we can bring joy to the heart of the Almighty God by our heart of worship. I was so

deeply moved by this simple yet profound revelation that I didn’t care anymore whether I would get to dance in

the musical. What could be more wonderful and a better

use of time than bringing joy to God Himself! I rested

during the dress rehearsal, and the next night the high fever was miraculously gone as my temperature dropped

down two whole degrees (Celsius). I ended up being able to dance in both of the performances we had the following days. I was very thankful to God for healing me, but I think I was even more thankful for learning this important lesson: worshipers’ time is never wasted!

Worship Protects Our Hearts

When we dance or do anything as worship to God,

our hearts are being protected from many offenses.

Other people’s criticism doesn’t affect our emotions in a bad way when we do everything for the Lord and for His

glory. I don’t mean that we shouldn’t care about feed-

back we receive from people. Actually it’s often helpful to consider other

people's views on things. However,
we can never please everyone. It's important to know

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that our goal in worship is to please God and bring joy to His heart.

We should keep in our minds who we are dancing

for when receiving feedback from people. Positive feed-

back is always encouraging, but it is dangerous to build our identity and our ministry on other people's praises.

Our identity and ministry should always be founded on

what God says and thinks about us. We minister and

worship God because God loves us, not because we are

trying to earn love from God or other people.

It's like we all have a "love tank" in our hearts that

needs to be filled for us to be happy. God is the only

one who can fill up this tank to overflowing. If we let Him keep on pouring His love into our hearts, then

the need to constantly get approval from people disap-

pears. On the other hand, if our "love tank" is empty,

we are like starving children who try to find love and acceptance from everyone around us. That's why it is so important that we learn to receive God's love in a personal way. It is the greatest source of strength that exists. When we are filled with God's love, our happiness is not obsessively dependent on positive feedback from other people. When I receive praises from people, I like to think of it as receiving a flower. It brings a smile to my face, but it's not something I need to feed on. I receive it with gratitude and then give it to my Papa's heavenly garden.

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Receiving negative feedback is also much easier when our "love tank" is full and we are doing everything as worship to God. We don't get so easily wounded or offended by people's comments when we know that we are fully loved by the Lord. Besides, some feedback that may seem negative can end up being constructive and very helpful as such. When I led a worship dance team at the School of Creative Arts in Australia, I once made an anonymous

questionnaire where other students could give feedback on what they thought about worship dance as a part of our collective worship gatherings. Seventy students answered that questionnaire. I was happy to hear that most of them felt that worship dance helped them to connect with God better. However, as a team leader, I benefited even more from hearing some critical feedback on some things that we could have done better.

This research also helped me understand that people's opinions can be quite contradictory to each other.

In my questionnaire, some students said they would like to see more choreographed dance in worship while others said they prefer the spontaneous, improvised dance.

It is good to lovingly consider people's wishes, but we can't be thrown around by everyone's opinions. When

receiving feedback from people, it's good to always take it first to the Lord and ask Him what He thinks. All the worship is for God alone. There is no other audience, as such. Sometimes when people overly criticize the way

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the worship is done, it might be a good idea to remind them that it wasn't for them. (Lovingly, of course!)

God Is Worthy of Costly Worship

There is a touching story in the Gospel of Mark about a woman who anointed Jesus with expensive perfume made of pure nard (see Mark 14). The Gospel of John tells us that this woman was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus (see John 12). Some people got very upset about such a "waste," counting how much money they could have got by selling the perfume. They were rebuking Mary harshly and basically suggesting that the money could have been spent for something much more useful, like helping the poor. I love the way Jesus responded:

"Leave her alone," said Jesus. "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to Me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have Me" (Mark 14:6-7).

At the end, Jesus added that what Mary did was in preparation for His burial and that wherever the Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she did will be

told in memory of her.

We have a lot to learn about the way Mary ex-

pressed her love to Jesus without counting the cost. It's unavoidable that running a worship team will add to the

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expenses of a local church and require generosity from

its members, whether financially or in giving time to

make it all happen. But isn't Jesus worth all of this and much more!

Jesus is coming back for a glorious Bride, and I be-

lieve it's time for the Bride to make herself ready for Him! Part of this preparation is to learn how to worship wholeheartedly and with everything we are, so that it

can be said:

Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For

the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride

has made herself ready (Revelation 19:7).

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Source

James Strong, LL.D., STD, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990). (Examples of the use of

each word are given, but not all the possible meanings are included.)

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About Saara Taina

Saara Taina is a worship dancer from Finland. She has been teaching about worship dance for over ten years in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. She has attended a school of worship in Jerusalem, Israel, and studied dance at a school of creative arts (Ministry Training College

of Christian City Church) in
Sydney, Australia. She is currently living in Redding,
California, where she co-leads the dance ministry team
at Bethel Healing Rooms and dances regularly in the
worship dance team at Bethel Church. Her heart is to
lead people into God's presence through dance and to
train and equip the global Bride of Christ to express worship with everything
she is.

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IN THE RIGHT HANDS, THIS BOOK WILL CHANGE LIVES!

Most of the people who need this message will not be looking for this book. To change their lives, you need to put a copy of this book in their hands.

But others (seeds) fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some a hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold (Matthew 13:8).

Our ministry is constantly seeking methods to find the good ground, the people who need this anointed message to change their lives. Will you help us reach these people?

Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop (2 Corinthians 9:6).

**EXTEND THIS MINISTRY BY SOWING
3 BOOKS, 5 BOOKS, 10 BOOKS, OR MORE TODAY,
AND BECOME A LIFE CHANGER!**

Thank you,



Don Nori Sr., Founder
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