

# TIMES SQUARE CHURCH

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## Loose Hands

**01**

Pastor Tim Dilena

If there's ever a time when we need proper definitions from the Word of God, it's today. People are disrespecting the Bible. We need a move of God in our country and around the world to bring us back to biblical definitions rather than our culture's definitions. We need a move of God again to understand what the Holy Spirit is saying to us.

Corrie Ten Boom, Holocaust survivor, Christian evangelist, and author of *The Hiding Place*, once said, "I have learned to hold all things in my hands loosely, and if God requires them back, then to let them go with gratitude."

I, too, have learned to hold all things loosely so God will not have to pry them out of my hands. Those who worship don't just lift up their hands; worshipers lift up loose hands.

"The Law of First Use" is a principle where we find the first instance of a word or phrase in the Bible and use it as the starting point for its definition. This first use becomes the cornerstone for further understanding.

Some define "worship" as slow songs and "praise" as fast songs, but that's not how the Bible defines these terms. The word "worship" is first used in the Bible in a very unexpected place. In this place there were no keyboards; no microphones; no LED walls; no stage; and no lights. There were just two people at a worship service; a 100-year-old man and a teenager. This was the first worship moment. The story is found in Genesis 22 when God asked Abraham to sacrifice his only son, Isaac. This was the first worship moment and where the

the word "worship" is first used. This is before the Book of Psalms or the writings of David. It did not involve a keyboard or a harp, or somebody singing, but a solemn and unprecedented moment between a 100-year-old man and a teenager.

**“ True worship  
is not simply our voice,  
but it's God's voice. ”**

"Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, 'Abraham!' And he said, 'Here I am.' Then He said, 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.' So Abraham got up early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and his son Isaac, and he split wood for the burnt offering, and set out and went to the place of which God had told him. On the third day, Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. Then Abraham said to his young men, 'Stay here with the donkey, and I and the boy will go over there; and we will worship and return to you'" (Genesis 22:1-5, NASB).

God asked Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering, and Abraham called that worship. He provides the first definition for the word "worship".

There is a grammatical nuance that is used in Hebrew writings to indicate importance by the repetitive use of a word. In this story, we see the use of the word “and” seven times in verse 3. When we see a word repeated in this way, it’s as if God has asked Abraham to do this thing and He doesn’t want anything left undone. If God has asked us to do something, then there should be no loose ends. We must do exactly what God has asked us to do.

What was the act that Abraham was performing through all those “ands” of verse 3? It was worship with persistence and completeness. And note there was no singing and no melody line involved. Abraham was teaching us that worship is not singing, worship is obedience. We, sadly, have brought worship down to its lowest common denominator thinking that it has to be done on a stage for a certain amount of time. Abraham was saying that his worship was with loose hands, doing what God was asking him to do. He let go just as Corrie Ten Boom described.

If you live the Christian life and plan on walking in obedience, keep this in mind: Christianity is all about a change of citizenship, governance, and allegiance. That’s what loose hands is all about. Somehow we’ve turned worship into singing. It has become more like a concert, with dimmed lights, smoke machines, and a 17-minute timer. The attendees sip on coffee in the sanctuary as they watch, but they don’t participate in worship.

There’s no obligation to worship. You can hold a cup of coffee in your hand because worship has become a spectator event. But true worship involves having open hands and receptive hearts. We all should be worshipers, entering in with open hearts, where the specifics don’t matter. Sing whatever you’d like. Worship means being obedient to what God has asked us to do.

Hebrews 2:1 (NASB) says, “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it.”

We’ve drifted away from real worship. We’ve turned worship into singing because singing makes no demands on us—but worship does. Singing has become an automatic response—and God forbid if

the lyrics are not projected on the screen, or if it’s a song that you don’t know—it’s reduced to just clapping.



We, however, must choose to worship with loose hands and say, “God, we will obey everything You’ve asked us to do. We will lift our hands, and we will be obedient, and we will pray, and we will respond to all that You have for us.”

First and foremost, biblical worship is God speaking to us in those moments. True worship is not simply our voice, but it’s God’s voice. In Acts 13 we learn that the first missionary journey was commissioned during a worship service, another example of loose hands.

“Now there were prophets and teachers at Antioch, in the church that was there: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set Barnabas and Saul apart for Me for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:1–2, NASB).

Take special note that it was while they were worshiping the Lord and fasting that the Holy Spirit called for the first missionary journey to take place. That’s what happens when we come with the Genesis 22 definition. We say, “God, it’s not about my voice, it’s about yours.”

God took two people from the five-member team, Barnabas, son of encouragement, and Paul, and He set them apart to expand His kingdom. Can you imagine the church of Antioch going, “We can’t thrive unless we have Paul and Barnabas.” And God goes, “I’m taking those two because we’re going to expand the Gospel

**NEW**

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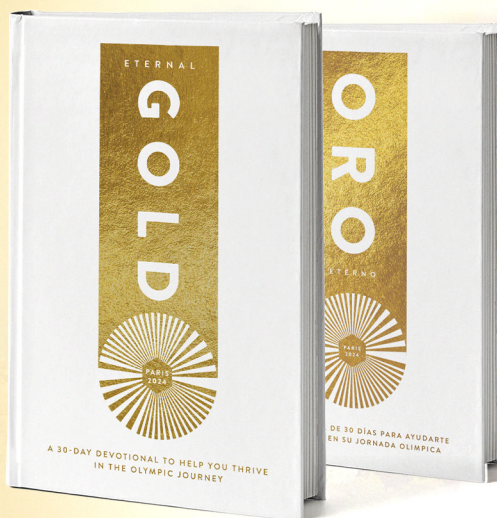
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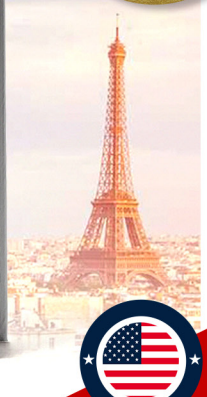


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around the world.”

There is nothing greater than a worship service where God speaks saying, “Let go. Have loose hands.”

I wonder if it was hard for Antioch to let Paul and Barnabas go. It certainly must have been for Abraham to let Isaac go. Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. One son, Ishmael, was the product of a “mistake”. The other son, Isaac, was the product of a promise and a miracle. It probably would’ve been a lot easier if God had asked for Ishmael, but God asked for the hard thing—He asked for the miracle!

A friend of mine suggested that I go to a rabbinical bookstore in Brooklyn, New York to buy a Chumash. The Chumash is a compilation of commentaries on the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament. The Chumash is unique in that unlike other commentaries that focus on the black letters, its focus is on the traditional Jewish stories surrounding the verses.

When I looked up Genesis 22 in the Chumash, I discovered that it wasn’t just a command that God gave to Abraham, but it was a conversation between them. According to Hebrew tradition, it says that at every comma, Abraham was pushing back. So when we read it and think that Abraham readily obeyed, the seven “ands” in verse 3 were pushbacks. Abraham did not have loose hands at first.

If God were to speak during worship and He chooses a Barnabas, a Saul, or even, an Isaac, can we respond with the same amazing words that Job did? God chose Job’s children, his property, and his health and Job responded with this:

“Then Job got up, tore his robe, and shaved his head; then he fell to the ground and worshiped. He said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord’” (Job 1:20–21, NASB).

God is worthy to be worshipped no matter what. We’ve been taught how to praise Him when He has chosen to add to our lives: When He provides the finances, the home, the long-awaited child, or the job. We’ve not been taught, however, to praise Him when he subtracts: When He says, I want that back now. How many of us can echo Job’s words, “Blessed be the name of the Lord”?

True worship begins with God removing all competition. No more rivals. Worship removes the rivals. When we come to Christ, deliverance takes those addictions and those things we want out of our lives. Worship is when we open our hands and offer the things we love. Worship says, “God, you can request anything You want. There’s no relationship, no dream, no vision, no friend, no possession that is in my control. It all belongs to You.”

The greatest New Testament teaching on worship is by Jesus. In John 4:23 (NASB), He said,

“But a time is coming, and even now has arrived, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.”

Let us be the worshipers that the Father is seeking to worship Him in spirit and truth, with loose hands!



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