

Worshipping God in an Undignified Manner
A Reflection on 2 Samuel 6
Pastor Paul Micu

I guess there's a praise and worship song out there these days entitled, "Undignified." From what I understand the thrust of the song stems from the context of **2 Samuel 6** where David danced before the Lord and gets reprimanded by his wife Michal for doing so. David's response is that he will be even "more undignified" (NIV) if it means worshipping God. I also understand there is a book currently on the market known as the *Worship Team Handbook*. Chapter 9 of this instructional book is called "*Dancing in Your Underwear, A Biblical Model.*"

As a disclaimer, I've not heard this song, nor have I read this book, however I believe I have a fairly good grasp of the message they're trying to get across. If I'm even remotely close, then I'm disappointed with the direction American Christianity or should I say American "Churchianity" is headed. If I'm way off, then I do apologize in advance for taking out of context the intended message of the authors.

It seems there are those who believe the most important lesson and application of **2 Samuel 6** is for Christians to dance and to get crazy and wild during times of music and worship. This thought is derived from David's actions in his exuberance before the Lord, In **2 Samuel 6** we read about David disrobing (**vs. 20**), wearing a linen ephod (**vs. 14a**), and dances before the Lord with all his might (**vs. 14b**). I guess I can understand how one could conclude that David was dancing around in his underwear. But that's not what the text says. What it says is that he danced, wearing a linen "ephod." An ephod was a very simple garment that we find priests wearing elsewhere in the Scriptures. In fact, priests could be called "those who wear the linen ephod," **1 Samuel 22:18**. We also read of Samuel wearing such a garment while carrying out his duties in the tabernacle, **1 Samuel 2:18, 28**. For a description of this priestly garment read **Exodus 28:6-14**. Once we establish that the ephod was a garment worn by God's priests, and not some unmentionables the typical person would buy off the back shelf of Wal-Mart, then we begin to realize our contemporary application is humility before our holy God, and not perverse indecency.

The application of **2 Samuel 6** has nothing to do with how to wildly dance in one's undies before the Lord! In fact the context revolves around God's holiness and worshiping Him in holiness and obedience. As you read through the chapter you'll read about a good man named Uzzah. Uzzah was a classic case of good intentions but disobedient to what God clearly set forth. In short, God said not to touch the Ark of the Covenant. Uzzah did so as it started to rumble off the cart, and paid for his disobedience with his life. The honor of God and His holiness is the thrust of the chapter, not stretching the idea that exuberant worship in one's priestly garment and jumping around in one's tidy whites are one and the same.

One may argue however, that David's claim to worship in a "more undignified manner than this" must allude to some form of wild and uncontrolled flailing. The reason behind Michal's rebuking of David was the fact that she didn't think a king should act in this manner. She didn't think a king should take off his kingly garments and dance before commoners. Michal thought David's kingly image would be tarnished for worshiping in this manner. We need to remember that Michal was the daughter of King Saul, a man who possessed the outward image of a great king, but did not possess a great heart for the Lord. So Michal's idea of what a good king image was founded on the external qualities she saw in her father. David, on the other hand, had a passionate heart for the Lord. He recognized the fact that kingly robes may impress people but do not impress God, and that he would remove the kingly robe before God and others as a sign of humility before the King of Kings.

There's an interesting parallel we could make with Jesus taking off his garments in **John 13**. Here we read of Jesus removing His garments and girding himself in order to humbly wash His servant's feet. Peter thought this was undignified for the King of the universe to be touching and washing the feet of lowly sinners. It's interesting that in the next half of that same chapter, Jesus alludes to His immanent death. It is this pastor's perspective to draw the parallel of David's undignified actions with Christ's, in that Jesus removed his garments to wash the disciples feet and then in essence implying, "you think washing your feet is undignified... wait until you see the cross!" Again, my point is that being undignified in our worship is about humility before our great God, not obnoxious and dishonorable behavior.

Undignified worship is not merely in the singing or the dancing, but in the entire lifestyle and obedience of the worshiper. Being undignified is about regularly making God-centered, self-humbling choices in every aspect of our lives, not simply the euphoric bodily movements we display during the emotionally heightened music of an electrically-charged youth event. "Being more undignified" is about obedience to a holy God and His Word.

This world tells me that I can apply my years of education and my multiple college degrees toward the acquisition of more money and more stuff. However, when I choose to concentrate on the fact that if I gain the whole world yet forfeit my soul, my life would be worthless, that is "being more undignified." I live in a time that as a married man, I am supposed to have the choice to fulfill my intimate needs in ways other than my wife. However, when I choose to be obedient to God and His Word by enjoying the wife of my youth, and being committed to her only, that is "being more undignified." My flesh tells me that I deserve a break, and that I am entitled to rest, relaxation, and entertainment. However, my spirit tells me that I deserve nothing but Hell, and that only by God's grace am I His child and that He wants me to serve Him and others before myself, that is "being more undignified."

Young people: When you are committed to living a life of purity and virginity before marriage even when the world says you're missing out on all the fun, this is "being more undignified." When you obey and honor your parents in a way that lowers your own desires and exalts the fact that when you obey your parents, you're actually obeying God, this is "being more undignified." When you mess up big time as a child of God, and you humbly throw your dirty self at the feet of His mercy only to find lavish forgiveness and cleansing, this is "being more undignified."

Consider the fact that God is so holy that the taking of life is the only sacrifice that could satisfy His holiness. Uzzah knew this truth, King David knew this truth. We would be wise to meditate on the holiness of our God and to realize that it is our very lives that should have been taken as a result of our disobedience and our disregard for His holiness. But God, Who is rich in mercy, took instead the life of his only Son, that we might become His loved children.

How dare we apply frivolous, indecent, and dishonoring behavior when it comes to worshiping our great and holy God.