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Directing Your Praise

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Recommended Citation

Bloemhof, Ashley, "Directing Your Praise" (2017). *Student Work*. 31.
http://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/student_work/31

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Directing Your Praise

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Ashley Bloemhof

February 4,
2017

Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 112:1-9 \[10\]](#)

[Isaiah 29:13-16](#)

[Mark 7:1-8](#)

Over Christmas break, Dordt College's Concert Choir traversed the tundra in North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Manitoba, and Ontario to perform seven concerts in seven churches. Every night, fifty-two voices joined together, singing songs written as a testament to God's display of righteousness, faithfulness, and mercy in all seasons of life. Lyrics dense with meaning and chords rich with texture filled the sanctuaries as the students combined word and song before audiences of various shapes, sizes, and accents.

Without a sincere passion for Christ, however, without an intentional directing of their hearts toward heaven, the lyrics and chords would have been worthless, regardless of how well the students performed.

In Isaiah 29, the Old Testament prophet speaks of woe towards King David's city. Among the list of the Israelites' offenses is Isaiah's mention of hypocrisy, unveiling the Lord's message to the people in verse 13: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men." God's children—who He delivered from the Promised Land, who He watched over for forty years in the desert—had the impression that they could deceive God by 'praising' Him with their lips while worshiping worldly idols and ideals with their hearts. What the Israelites failed to realize was that without the presence of true humility, passion, and love in their hearts, they could not offer the slightest of exaltations to their Maker.

Is that not a condemning truth? Are we really much different than those Israelites, the people we so quickly use as examples of what NOT to do? Arguably, no. More often than not, we are hardly different than God's early people; humanity's naturally sinful nature has remained a constant since the fall.

In those moments when our actions are empty of Christ's love, in those seasons when life seems empty of meaning, we should not then be surprised when the Lord breaks into our reality. "I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder," says the Creator, "the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish." When we resort to comfortable living, to going through the motions, to singing the songs we know so well while running through an agenda in our minds, God says He will reveal himself to us in ways that force us to realize our utter depravity and draw us closer to Him. In this chapter of Isaiah, the prophet offers hope to the Israelites—relief in the midst of the woe that ensues when we live complacent lives, lives void of a loving presence and determination. Isaiah says that God will change His people's hearts so that "the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. Once more the humble will rejoice in the Lord; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel" (vs. 18-19). Where believers had indulged themselves in self-proclaimed wisdom and intelligence, the Lord will grant them the lens to see the truth that ultimately governs the universe: that of His Son's death and resurrection.

As we kneel before the Lord, feeling at peace with our helpless state, submitting before the throne, we humble ourselves in full recognition that we are called to follow the rules of the Savior, not of man. When we do so, our actions will necessarily be filled with authentic joy and love. We will live in intentional humility and sincere love. We will walk with faith of a future with our Savior. We will sing the songs of our Creator with the joy of salvation in our hearts. Our lives will be a song of sincere love towards God and others, a stream of worship that elevates our lives from mere performances of humankind to daily and intentional displays of Christ's love for and towards God and our

neighbor.