

*I wanted to become
the very willing relay station
for the breath of God.*

Richard Rohr¹

I really love singing praises to God in our worship services. I have a very loud voice, and follow the exhortation to praise “with a very loud voice”, found in 2 Chronicles 20:19. Volume is not enough, though, and neither is hitting the right musical notes (though there is great power and meaning in our harmony). I must sing with my spirit and understanding, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 14:15.

When I think about the joy of singing or otherwise pouring our hearts out² in worship, I realize that it is a special feeling; it is about drawing close to God with full and deep breathing using the power of the diaphragm. Such breathing can reduce our blood pressure, but it can definitely increase our spirit pressure. It is much like an aerobic exercise that is better for your soul than your body.

Our breath is our worship, in a way, for the Lord God breathed into us the breath of life³. It is said that the name “Yahweh” is like the sound of breathing in and out⁴. That would also represent the flow of God’s Spirit as it moved⁵ across the earth in creation. God is so great that we should breathe as deeply as we can when we worship.

It takes deep breathing to speak or sing out loud. Eugene Peterson, in the Message, renders Acts 16:25, where Paul and Silas were in prison, as follows: “Along about midnight, Paul and Silas were at prayer and singing a robust hymn to God.” The word “robust” definitely has the connotation of loudness. The fact that this led to an earthquake reminds me of the walls of Jericho, where the voices of the Israelites were a conduit for the power of God! So, we should fill the house of God with our singing – trying to “raise the roof” as it were. The idea is like the day when God filled the place where the disciples waited for the Spirit with a great sound of great wind⁶.

The ultimate thought is to consider the idea of singing / worshipping in heaven. Imagine how that would be! Listen to the sounds from the book of Revelation:

- Revelation 1:15b; His ... voice was like the sound of rushing waters.
- Revelation 9:9; They had breastplates like breastplates of iron, and the sound of their wings was like the thundering of many horses and chariots rushing into battle.
- Revelation 14:2; And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps.
- Revelation 19:1; After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting: “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
- Revelation 19:6; 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.

It will be noisy there, with voices, music, and other activities, but the volume reflects the fact that the glory of God is so powerful! Our worship here on earth should reflect that!

1. Richard Rohr, The Naked Now: Learning to See as the Mystics See, p.176

2. Lamentations 2:19b; ... pour out your heart like water in the presence of the Lord.
Psalm 62:8; Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.
3. Genesis 2:7; Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.
Job 33:4; The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.
4. It has been said that God's name, "Yahweh," is in itself a breath prayer, perhaps the very first: "The Jews did not speak God's name, but breathed it with an open mouth and throat: inhale—Yah; exhale—weh. By our very breathing we are speaking the name of God and participating in God's breath. This is our first and our last word as we enter and leave the world. Richard Rohr, OFM from his book The Naked Now.
5. Genesis 1:2; the Spirit ("moving", KJV; "hovering", NIV and NKJV over the waters)
6. Acts 2:2

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