

Praise! (5)

As we grow closer to Jesus on our walk in life, we realize that there are many things worth praising Him for. Praise is often confused with singing songs, but it is much more.

Praise is simply giving credit where credit is due. God has done so much for us that we should praise Him for it in joyful gratitude. An interesting thing occurs when you give praise to God, you may find a great deal of joy in it.

Remember, you were created to praise and worship God. Not doing so may lead to an unfulfilled and frustrated life, but praising God will lead to a sense of fulfillment and joy that will lead you to praise Him even more.

There are ample ways to praise God, and all are open for us to express our gratitude to Him for who He is and what He has done.

Read Psalm 149-150

1. List some of the ways that God can be praised (With what? How?)

2. Why should God be praised?

3. Who should praise God? _____

4. What command is given again, and again throughout these two chapters?

There is no set manner in how we should praise God. We can dance, sing, write poetry (the Psalms are written as poetry), play instruments, etc. The above chapters listed many ways in which we can praise God, but there are even more.

Along with **how** we praise God, **where** we praise God is universal. We could be at home, at work, or at a campfire with our friends and still praise God. It is important to note that we should praise God with others as well as by ourselves.

We all serve the same Lord, Jesus, and it is essential that we spend time praising Him together. There are limitless ways and places we can praise God, yet it is important to look at the reasons we do it. In the Psalms, there were many examples of why God should be praised.

1. Praise God just for who He is. God is powerful, loving, all-knowing; His ways are not our ways, we cannot understand Him; He is everywhere...
2. Praise God for what He has done. God sent Jesus so that we can know Him! God may have answered one of your prayers...
3. Praise God for the blessings in your life. There are thousands of tiny blessings we experience each day that go unnoticed, such as the sunshine, fresh air, a car to drive, a house to live in. You can praise Him for loved ones, things you enjoy...

List 10 things you can thank God for...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

There are many reasons to praise God, but there is one more topic of praise that needs to be covered. We have looked at where, how and why we praise God, but when should we do it? Essentially, we can praise God anytime, but when life boils down, there are the good times, and the bad times. During one, we can be tempted (unknowingly) to forget God because things are going so well. In the other, praising God can seem like the last thing we would want to do in that situation, but the Bible tells us to praise Him in season and out.

Read Psalm 31

The author [David] seemed pretty distressed at the beginning of this Psalm, didn't he? He was suffering from conviction from sin, enemies were plotting against him and everything seemed to be falling apart. Yet, despite his circumstance, he praised God. He even praised God for answering the prayer that he had just prayed even though no answer had been given yet.

Whether the road of life is rocky and filled with pot holes, or it's as smooth as a newly paved highway, God is still the same and deserves our praise.

A Relationship Through Prayer

God has given an amazing privilege to those who follow His Son, prayer. No matter where you are or what you are doing you can talk to God directly. Above that, He wants to hear from you. The one who created the universe desires a close relationship with you. However, like most things in life, prayer is a **choice** and there is a wise and unwise way it can be done.

Matthew 6:5

When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men.

- What is the motivation of the hypocrites to pray? _____

It is impossible to have a close relationship with God if we seek only the praise of others. We should seek God's blessing and advice, that is why we pray in the first place.

Matthew 6:7

And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words.

- Does God want your prayer to be genuine? Yes____ No____
- What do you think it means to use "meaningless repetition" in your prayers? _____

Common sense would say that there is no way to be a true friend if all you did was say the same thing all the time. God the Father already knows what it is that you are going to pray for, and He wants to hear it from you, but we do not need to make the mistake of believing that we can *impress* God in the way we pray.

God has told us in His word that there is a great difference between mere mechanical prayer and praying effectively. The difference appears to be a matter of where we abide.

John 15:7

If you abide in Me (Jesus), and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

This is a very overlooked and misunderstood verse in the Bible. Many who read this verse might have the thought about what they would ask for if they could get anything. The problem here is that God is not a genie in a bottle just waiting for your request. We must abide in His word (the Bible) by applying its teaching to our lives. This helps us learn more of Jesus and become more like Him. The closer we are to Him, the more we will pray like Him.

This is not to say that we must be just like Jesus in order to have our prayers heard and answered. If that were the case, how could any of us come before the Father? God does want us to come to Him with our concerns because He cares for us.

1 Peter 5:7

Casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

If you have believed in Jesus as your savior, God is now your Father. God already knows all about our problems and our concerns, but like any good father, He still wants His children to come to Him and seek His help with them. The answer to our prayer is found in abiding in the one who saved you in the first place and started you in this new life, Jesus.

God has spoken everything He wants us to know through one book: the Bible.

Abiding in Jesus can be summed up with one word: relationship. True prayer is all about a **conversation** with God. When you have a relationship with another person you talk with them (not at them), otherwise the relationship suffers. Once saved, we are called a son or daughter of God, giving us full access to talk with Him whenever we desire.

- If God desires a relationship, how does He talk back to us? _____

So, how do you pray? Is there a specific way or can you just say whatever comes to mind?

Read Matthew 6:5-15 to see how Jesus explains prayer.

What do the following verses say about prayer?

Vs. 5 _____

Vs. 6 _____

Vs. 7 _____

Vs. 9 _____

Vs. 10 _____

Vs. 11 _____

Vs. 12 _____

Vs. 13 _____

Some practical ideas to help focus your prayer are as follows: pray *sincerely* and pray *specifically*. God knows your thoughts so why try to dance around with words to try and get Him to give us what we want. Praying specifically is vital to getting ***specific answers***. If you ask someone to go to the grocery store and get cereal, but don't tell them what kind, you could end up with a kind that you do not like. Did the person that got the cereal do anything wrong? No, but you weren't specific. Praying specifically will give you specific answers and strengthen your relationship with God. Remember, the answer to your prayer may be "No," but at least it's specific.

The answer God gives to your prayer may not always be the answer that you expect!

John 14:13

Whatever you ask in My (Jesus) name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.

- Why would Jesus do what you ask in His name? _____

Having a close relationship with God causes something to happen that might go against your nature, you glorify God. Giving God glory basically acknowledges Him for who He is and the awesome things He has done. He created you, died on the cross for you, and has heaven waiting for you. Glorifying God will pour out of you like the waters over Niagara Falls when you fully embrace His love.

Worship

The way in which we conduct ourselves says a lot about what we believe. Our actions may either glorify God or glorify ourselves. We were created to glorify God. Adam and Eve were created by God and placed in a beautiful garden on a perfect earth. They were told to tend the garden, but this was not the limit of their duties. Seeing all that God had done, and being able to commune with Him directly, it became clear that they were created to worship and glorify God for who He is and what He has done.

This obligation is within us too in the twenty first century. Our existence has not strayed so far from Adam and Eve's (our first parents) to worship and glorify God. The main difference is the introduction of sin in us and in creation around us. God is still to be glorified and worshiped even in a world that has problems.

Our personal purity is one area where we will choose to glorify either God or ourselves.

The first area in which we can glorify God or ourselves is our thought life. Our thoughts are either directed towards God and His kingdom or towards ourselves and our kingdom.

2 Corinthians 10:5

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ,

- What does this verse say to take captive? _____
- What could happen if you let your thoughts run wild? _____

Taking your thoughts captive means being in control of what you think about and allow yourself to dwell on. A simple reality of life is this: what you think about long enough, you will try to do. This is why Scripture encourages us to think about certain things.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.

List all the things from the above verse we are to dwell on.

Our thoughts can either ruin us or glorify something bigger than us. How could our thought life ruin us in the following areas?

- Money
- Gossip
- Purity
- Respecting Others

Our God is a God of order. You can look at creation outside your window and notice this. It should be no wonder as to why God would then desire us to take control of our thoughts and make them obedient to His direction.

One area of significant interest to God is the way we handle money. Finances are one of the most talked about subjects in the Bible. Jesus taught about money more than any other topic in the New Testament. Why? Is God in need of money?

Psalms 50:10

For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills.

- How many cattle do you think God owns? _____
- Does it sound like God needs our money? ___ Yes ___ No

Money is one of the top things people fight over, hoard and dishonor themselves and God with. Money is used for everything. We revolve our lives around money and making money. By the world's view if you have money you are living your life well. Many people think that they can buy themselves happiness. One thing is for certain: money **does not**

"Money is like manure, of very little use unless it is spread." - Francis Bacon

buy happiness. God addresses money to see how serious we are about worshiping Him. If we truly desire to glorify God, then we must do so with that which we hold precious: our lives, our time, our service and our money. Is it any wonder that the Father desires us to glorify Him with our money.

Malachi 3:10

"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."

Tithe:
One tenth (10%) of
one's total income,
wages or pay.

A tithe is when we give ten percent of our money to God. This is an act of faith on our part in giving up 10% of our income to the Lord. But what has God promised to do in return?

God even seems to challenge us in tithing. Notice how the Lord says "Test Me now in this..." Does He give the impression that you will suffer for giving a tenth of your money to Him?

God uses the money that we bring in to build up His church, reach unbelievers and praise the name of Jesus. He allows us the privilege of contributing to this cause. Remember this, God is the one who causes us to make the money in first place. It technically all belongs to Him, but all He asks of you is ten percent.

God gives us the ability to make money, then asks us for ten percent of the money that truly belongs to Him anyway, then tells us that He will bless us for giving to Him what belonged to Him already. What an amazing God we serve!

Discussion Questions

- 1. What are some wrong motives in praying?*
- 2. What do you think it means to abide in Christ? How could you start doing this today?*
- 3. What does it mean to take our thoughts captive? How could this benefit you?*
- 4. How would your life be different if you tithed? Would this please God or displease Him?*
- 5. What are some unique ways that you could praise God?*