

The Power of Praise Part 3

We are continuing our series on praise. We've talked about praise as an expression of the attitude of our heart. We are grateful, thankful, overwhelmed by God's presence, his mercy shown to us, his blessings given to us and we respond with heartfelt praise. I shared this quote last week from Peter Lord who said, **"Praise is my response to the person, presence, position, power, greatness, majesty and the love of God."** ...Peter Lord

We talked last week about the benefit of praise in our lives. God doesn't need our praise, but we need to praise him. We said praise is becoming, it puts things in proper perspective in our lives, it renews and refreshes our minds, it brings peace to us, it brings the rule and authority of God into our circumstances. It is part of a life of obedience to praise the Lord. The bible declares, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!" Praise is what we were created to do! We find our purpose when we praise the Lord. Some of you may have grown up in a church where you went to catechism class. If so, you may remember The Westminster Shorter Catechism declares, **"Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever."** We are created to glorify God, to praise him, to honor him with our words, our choices, our actions, our thoughts. In Isaiah 43:21 God refers to "the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise." That's us!

Our purpose is to praise Him. We were created for praise and instructed to praise Him. There are benefits and blessings that come from praising the Lord. Power is released in praise. So our question this morning then is, **How Do We Praise The Lord?** To find the answer of course we turn to the word of God. What does the bible say about how to praise the Lord? I always told people to worship and praise the Lord anyway they felt comfortable. I used to say "I don't believe the Lord will ask us to do anything that makes us uncomfortable" and then I realized, of course he does!! For our own good, like any loving Father, God asks us to do things at times in order to stretch us and teach us, to move us outside of our comfort zone in order to discover greater blessings and potential and accomplish more for the kingdom. It may be God has something new for you to discover as you step beyond your comfort zone and begin to praise him and worship him according to his word. So how do we praise the Lord? The bible says...

Praise is to be vocal. We can think good and God honoring thoughts, but praise needs to be expressed and if you are physically able to speak, then speak his praise. If you are non-verbal, you use sign language or some other means of expression, use that means to express praise, but for most of us, in a worship service or even in private devotions, praise is to be vocal.

The writer of Hebrews declares, **“Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess his name.” Hebrews 13:15.** The fruit of your lips, the words of your mouth, are to be offered as a sacrifice of praise. The Psalmist declares, **“Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live.” Psalm 63:3** We are to praise him with our words, with our lips, our vocal cords. It doesn’t always have to be at the top of our lungs, shouting our praise, but it should be expressed. If you are not comfortable expressing your praise vocally, aloud, begin to practice that. In your private devotion time, begin to praise him aloud. There are times you need to hear yourself magnify the Lord and praise his name. The bible speaks of “lifting up your voice to the Lord.” Praying and praising God aloud is something the saints of God have done throughout history according to the bible. “Well, I never pray out loud.” That’s why I’m asking you to practice it. It’s time you learned to do it. Do it and see what happens. God is the one you are talking to, but something happens in your own spirit as you begin to praise the Lord aloud. “But I don’t know what to say. I don’t have the words.” That’s why the Holy Spirit gave us the Psalms. Get your bible and praise the Lord with the words of the Psalmist. Change the pronouns from He to You. Make it personal. Instead of “He is my rock” make it “You are my rock.” Thank him, praise him, speak of his greatness! (Psalm 103) Train yourself to praise the Lord!

Praise is to be physical. Seriously? The posture of our body can be another way of expressing praise or showing honor or humility before the Lord, showing our full surrender to the Lord. We don’t come into the Lord’s presence with swagger, with an attitude, we come with praise on our lips and with gratitude that is even expressed in our body language. Look at what the bible says. **“Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker, for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care.” Psalm 95:6-7** Sometimes we just need to bow down before him, we need to kneel before the Lord. We can show we are subject to his authority in our life by bowing or kneeling. An earthly subject is never to be physically elevated higher than an earthly king. We bow out of love and adoration and worship before the King of Kings, the King and Sovereign of our soul. Our physical posture can reflect our spiritual posture of submission and surrender.

In the book of Nehemiah, the exiles have returned to Jerusalem and Ezra begins reading God’s law to the people. The bible says as Ezra opened the book, **“The people all stood up. Ezra praised the Lord, the great God and all the people lifted their hands and responded,**

‘Amen! Amen!’ Then they bowed down and worshiped the Lord with their faces to the ground.” Nehemiah 8:5-6 Their physical posture was an expression of praise and surrender.

In Pentecostal and charismatic churches we lift our hands in praise to the Lord. “Yeah, why do we do that?” We just read about God’s people doing it in Nehemiah. The Psalmist said, **“I will praise you as long as I live and in your name I will lift up my hands.” Psalm 63:4.** Paul writes to Timothy, **“I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer...” 1 Timothy 2:8.** So why do we lift our hands other than because the bible says to? I hope you agree that’s a good enough reason, but I see lifting our hands to God as a physical act of surrender (as in “stick em up!”) It’s a posture of surrender before the Lord. I also think of it as a way of saying, “Lord, I lift my praise to you, but also my hands are empty and eager to receive from you anything and everything you have for me.” We open our hands and our hearts to him in praise. We can lift up our head in praise, showing that we are focused on him, that our eyes are upon Him, that we are looking to him for his help, his blessing, his grace, his strength.

You can praise the Lord sitting, standing, kneeling, bowing, laying on the ground before him, running, jumping. When the lame man at the beautiful gate was healed in Acts 3, the bible says **“Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping and praising God.” Acts 3:8.** When God blesses you, you’ll find a way to praise him. The leper that Jesus healed in Luke 17 came back, **“...praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus feet and thanked him.” Luke 17:15** The bible says we are to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength. Love him with your whole being, including your body and praise him with your physicality as well. Praise God with everything within you. **“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name.” Psalm 103:1** With your whole being, physically, mentally, emotionally, bless the Lord and praise his holy name!

Praise is musical. I mentioned before that we look to the Psalms for help in praising the Lord and the Psalmists instruct us to sing to the Lord. **“Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts.” Psalm 105:1-2.**

“I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you...” Psalm 144:9.

“Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord O my soul. I will praise the Lord all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.” Psalm 146:1-2.

“Praise the Lord. How good it is to sing praises to our God, how pleasant and fitting to praise him.” Psalm 147:1.

“Praise God in his sanctuary...Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals...Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.” Psalm 150.

We started this series with Paul and Silas “praying and singing hymns to God” in Acts 16. The New Testament says, **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” Colossians 3:16**

In the book of Revelation we see the worship and praise that is happening eternally in God’s presence. They are singing and praising, adoring the Father and the Son. John saw thousands upon thousands of angels around the throne of God. **“In a loud voice they sang, ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!’ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea and all that is in them singing, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power for ever and ever.’” Revelation 5:12-13** That’s what’s happening in heaven and what should be happening here.

If you can’t sing, that’s okay. You don’t have to sing well. The bible says “make a joyful noise unto the Lord.” Psalm 100:1. It doesn’t have to be pretty, just make it joyful. If you can’t figure out the melody they’re singing, just focus on the words. I often say modern worship music is like a chant, not much melody, but the words and lyrics are heartfelt expressions of praise and worship to the Lord. Involve yourself in the experience of music and worship.

At the beginning of this series I mentioned that Bryce had said, “Let’s lift up our voice to the Lord, sing out a song to the Lord.” What song? The song of your heart! The song of praise that comes out of your spirit. **Praise should be innovative/creative.** I love the old songs and I love some of the new songs. The bible tells us to create, to innovate, to sing new songs. **“I will sing a new song to you, O God; on the ten-stringed lyre I will make music to you...” Psalm 144:9. “Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things...” Psalm 98:1** You don’t have to be a songwriter or even have musical talent to sing a new song to the Lord, just sing about what he has done in your life today. Just praise him with your song!

If Bryce says, sing out a song to the Lord, he will always be in a key of some sort. Find a note, a cord, and sing to the Lord. If you know how to harmonize, harmonize. Sing what you feel, what you want to express to the Lord. Allow the Holy Spirit to sing through you. If you don't have the words to sing or express, the Holy Spirit can sing through you in a heavenly language of praise. The Holy Spirit is the creative power of God. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead you and teach you as you praise and honor the Lord with creativity and innovation. Sing to the Lord a new song! Try it. (Sing: "Thank you Lord. I love you Lord. I give you my praise.")

Praise involves emotion. I know people get nervous when we say that. "I'm not an emotional person so I don't think it's right to say we have to be emotional in praise." I'm not saying you are going to be emotional in the same way as someone else. You won't. You don't have to be emotional, but your emotions will be involved. Consider what I said about praising the Lord with your whole heart and soul and spirit. That means our emotions are involved in praise to the Lord. We are emotional beings, we feel things, and God created us in a way that we can respond to him with emotion. I'm suggesting you don't need to fear emotion. Tears, joy, laughter, celebration, a shout of joy, lifting your voice, lifting your head, lifting your heart to the Lord, sitting quietly or quietly rejoicing, any and all of it can be appropriate as you praise the Lord. Hear the emotion in these verses. **"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn – shout for joy before the Lord, the King. Let the sea resound and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy..."** Psalm 98:4-8

"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs." Psalms 100:1-2 **"Clap your hands, all ye people, shout to God with the voice of triumph." Psalm 47:1.**

The book of Ezra tells of the moment when the exiles, people who had been forcibly removed from Jerusalem for 70 years have returned and they watch as the builders lay the foundation stones for the rebuilding of the temple. The bible says, **"With praise and thanksgiving they sang to the Lord, 'He is good; his love to Israel endures forever.' And all the people gave a great shout of praise to the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, wept aloud when they saw the foundation of this temple being laid, while many others shouted for joy. No one could distinguish the sound of the shouts of joy**

from the sound of weeping because the people made so much noise. And the sound was heard far away.” Ezra 3:11-13 Some weeping, some shouting for joy, some singing, some dancing before the Lord. It’s all part of praising the Lord with our whole heart, with our mind, our intellect, our spirit, our emotions, our voice, our lips, our words, our body language, our creativity, with planning and with spontaneity.

One last thought about praise. **Praise is to be taught to our children.** Right now children are praising the Lord in the Ark Park and in children’s church, but a few minutes here once or twice a week won’t suffice. Children are going to learn to praise the Lord because parents and family model a lifestyle of praise for their children. **“Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts...they will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty...they will tell of the power of your awesome works...they will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.” Psalm 145:3-7**

We, all of us, have a responsibility to praise the Lord and in so doing, we are telling the next generation of his mighty acts. Children and teenagers need to see us praising the Lord. Having a multi-generational church has challenges but think of the blessings, the privilege and responsibility we have to proclaim His greatness to the generations. On any given Sunday there will be three or four generations gathered, praising God and testifying that He is good and his mercy endures forever. We are obeying the Lord when we praise him and declare his mighty deeds to the next generation.

Is there a wrong way to praise Him? Well, we can’t do it with our eyes fixed on ourselves. Let’s get our eyes off ourselves and onto Jesus. Remember what he’s done and then respond! That’s praise! What has he done for you? What is He to you? He’s my everything and he is worthy of praise! Let’s praise Him!