

Lesson:What is Praise and how does it relate to our Christian lives?

Psalm: 150:6 Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

What is praise? Praise is an act of worship or acknowledgement by which virtues or deeds of another are recognize. Our praise to God is the means by which we express our joy to him. We praise God for who he is and what He does. (Psalm: 103:1-12)

There is power in our acknowledgement that He is worthy, above all else, of our worship and praise. His Spirit urges us onward, to press in close to him. Doesn't matter how good or "not so good" we feel like we can sing, doesn't matter if we like upbeat worship, more reflective songs, or traditional hymns. Doesn't matter if we're alone, with a few, or in a big group. Doesn't even matter whether we "feel" like it or not. Â What matters is this - our hearts in tune with our Creator and King.

David said, I will bless the lord at all times and his praise shall continually be in my mouth. (Psalm 34:1)

O magnify the lord with me and let us exalt His name together. (Psalm34:3)

Therefore praise should be an every day part of our lives. (Psalm 150:6)

LET EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH PRAISE THE LORD)

The Lord wants to fight your battles too, so take time to praise him in advance.

Praise breaks chains and opens doors.

You or your members probably have certain things holding you back. You might feel stuck, like nothing has changed in your life for the better. It sounds odd, but there's no better time for you to thank God than right now.

Paul did this in Acts 16 while he was in prison with Silas. In the middle of the night, the two decided to have a praise session. As they praised God, the Bible says, "The prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off!" (Acts 16:26 NLT).

That story is a miracle, but it's also a metaphor of what God does in our lives when we praise him. When you need to be set free from an attitude, an addiction, or habit, praise God. It'll break the chains holding you back.

My challenge to you is to learn to make praise your natural response for everything you face—good or bad. Develop that habit in your life and encourage your members to do the same—and then see what God does.

We have so much to praise God for, there's great power in giving honor to Him. And many of you live that truth out, every single day of your lives. The Bible is filled with examples of praise when we see His power released - life-changing miracles, dramatic stories of the enemy being halted or defeated, hearts being changed and drawn closer to Him.

Yet reality is that way too often, daily struggles or constant life demands can crowd out our praise to God. We might check the worship box at church and

somehow think we're good for the week. And all the while, with souls distant and cold, we sing words, we listen to music, then we go home.

Sometimes it really is a sacrifice to offer praise. We may not feel like it. We're struggling. We're weary. Or maybe, we feel like He let us down. We think God seems distant, like he's far away, or doesn't really care about what's troubling us. Painful life blows and losses might have recently sent us spiraling.

Here's what can make a lasting difference. When we make that decision to fix our eyes on Him, and daily give Him praise, no matter what's staring us straight in the face, we suddenly realize that God has already begun to release the grip those struggles can have over us.

As Christ-followers, we build many important spiritual habits into our lives—including prayer, Bible reading, gratitude, and so on. All of them will play a critical role in our spiritual journeys in 2022.

But we must not forget the habit of praising God. It's particularly important when we're struggling.

What makes praise so important for you and for those you lead? Here are seven reasons the habit of praising God is vital for you and those you lead in 2022.

Praise lifts your spirit.

Psalm 42:5-6 says: "Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again—my Savior and my God! Now I am deeply discouraged, but I will remember you" (NLT).

There's no doubt we have a lot in our world today to be discouraged about. But Psalm 42 reminds us to both praise God and remember what he has done in our lives when we're down.

The world is looking for hope. As Jesus-followers, we know the only real reason for hope. That's why worship is so energizing. It takes your eyes off of your troubles and puts them on Jesus.

Praise helps you sense God's presence.

God is always present whether you sense it or not. Sometimes we don't feel his presence, but that's because we've moved away from him. He hasn't.

When you don't feel God's presence is when you need to praise him the most. It's easier to act your way into a feeling than feel your way into an action. In fact, maturity is when we do what's right whether we feel like it or not. The Bible says, "Surely the righteous will praise your name, and the upright will live in your presence" (Psalm 140:13 NIV).

Praise enlarges your perception of God.

The Bible tells us this in Psalm 69:30: "I will praise the name of God with song And magnify Him with thanksgiving" (AMP). When we look at something with a magnifying glass, it gets bigger. When God gets bigger, our problems get smaller. Either your problems will be big or God will be big. It's your choice.

Praise reveals solutions we can't see.

We all have issues in our lives we simply can't figure out. They tie us up in knots. Psalm 73:16-17 describes this kind of situation: "I tried to understand all this, but it was too hard for me to see until I went to the Temple of God. Then I understood what will happen to them" (NCV). The temple of God is a metaphor in this Psalm for coming into the presence of God. It was through worshiping God that the writer got his answer.

I've seen this over and over as a leader. When I have no idea what to do next at Saddleback, God provides answers during my time in worship. As I'm thanking God, the Spirit drops an idea into my brain.

Praise helps us remember God's blessing.

Often when we're thinking about a big problem, it's all we can think about. It colors everything in our lives. That's why when you have a fight with your spouse, it tends to become everything you think about.

Praise will correct the imbalance. It'll remind you that not everything in your life is bad. In Psalm 105, the Bible describes this pattern: "Thank God! Pray to him by name! Tell everyone you meet what he has done! Sing him songs, belt out hymns, translate his wonders into music! ... Remember the world of wonders he has made, his miracles, and the verdicts he's rendered" (Psalm 105:1, 5 The Message).

When you have problems, you tend to focus on the negative. Praise helps you remember who you are and who God is.

Praise enlists God's protection.

When you praise God for an answer to your prayer before it happens, that's faith—and that's when God begins to fight for you.

In 2 Chronicles 20, we read about three enemy nations who ganged up on Israel. The only chance Israel had was for God to miraculously save them. So, King Jehoshaphat organized an unusual battle plan. He put a choir in front of the army as they marched into battle.

The Bible says as soon as the Israelites started praising God, confusion ensued—and the enemy was defeated.