



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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ISSUE 4

## THE INCREDIBLE POWER OF PRAISE

In **Psalm 34:1**, the psalmist declares his commitment to praise God, "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth." The psalmist is clear – he would bless God at all times. He would offer praise to God on a regular basis.

The psalmist's confession and commitment are a powerful example for every believer. Every believer needs this same confession and commitment. Your lips and life are to be filled with heartfelt and sincere praise to God.

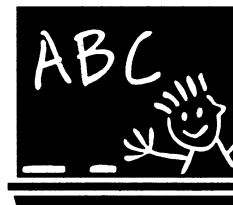
Are you regularly praising God? Can it be said of you that His praise is continually in your mouth? Your God is worthy of such a commitment, "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen" (**Romans 11:36**). Your God deserves a lifestyle of praise, "Every day I will bless You, and I will praise Your name forever and ever" (**Psalm 145:2**). Your God delights in and is pleased with praise, "Praise the LORD! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful" (**Psalm 147:1**). Praise is pleasant and beautiful to God.

For these reasons, God desires that you develop a lifestyle of praise. He yearns for you to adore and honor Him. God desires to hear

and receive "your" praise. God loves you. He has saved you. You are precious to Him. He now wants you to adore and glorify Him as your God and your Father.

Singing hymns in a church during the worship service is a great way to praise God. Adoring Him as you listen to Christian music is another way to honor Him. Yet, your Father desires that you express personal praise to Him on a regular basis. He not only desires this; He is also worthy of this.

How can you develop a lifestyle of praise for God? This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on how to grow in your ability to praise God. It will attempt to provide you with a biblical understanding of praise. It will also attempt help you to see how praise can fill every aspect of your life. And, it will offer practical suggestions for learning how to praise God.



### The Facts About Praise

Developing a lifestyle of praise begins with understanding what the Bible teaches about praise. The Word of God declares four basis

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facts about praise. These are the “ABC’s” of praise from the Bible.

- *Praise is focusing on and adoring God’s character (Psalm 33:1; 71:8, 14; 145:2).* Praise is selfless. It’s all about God. The word “praise” in both the Old and New Testaments means “to prize highly, to value greatly.” It is making known to God why you value Him, why you cherish Him, and why you love Him. You fix your gaze on God and tell Him why He is unique, valuable, and worthy. Everything else is pushed to the side that You might contemplate, meditate on, and openly declare God’s greatness. Praise is expressing God’s value and worth.
- *God has saved you that you might praise Him (Psalm 118:28; 1 Peter 2:9).* God has saved you that you might live a lifestyle of praise. He has redeemed you that you might know Him and adore Him. This is the reason for your salvation, “But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). You were called out of the darkness of sin into the light of salvation that you might proclaim His praises. He delivered you that you might honor and adore Him. Because you know Him, it is your privilege and responsibility to praise Him (Psalm 118:28).
- *You are to enter God’s presence with praise (Psalm 100:4).* The Word of God teaches that we are to approach God with praise. When we pray, we are to enter His presence with praise, “Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name” (Psalm 100:4). When you pray, you are approaching the eternal and almighty God. Praising God is the way to enter the presence of the great and living God of time and eternity.
- *Praise is the pursuit of the believer’s life (Psalm 57:7, 104:33, 145:2, 146:2).* Praise is to be the pursuit of your life, “While I live I will praise the LORD; I will sing praises to my God while I have my being” (Psalm 146:2). You must have the commitment to

praise Him. As a child of God, you have the desire to praise Him. This is the natural result of your salvation. Yet, you now must be disciplined to learn how to praise Him. You must strive to grow in your ability to praise Him. Praising God is both a desire and a discipline. The believer needs a commitment to pursue praise.



## The Incredible Power Of Praise

Praise is the believer’s adoration of God. It is honoring and exalting God because of who He is. It is focusing on His great character. In other words, it’s all about God. Praise is a soul-forgetting action.

Praise is beautiful to God (Psalm 147:1). He delights in and is blessed by our adoration of His character. Yet, praise has the power to transform our relationship to God. It will have a definite and life-changing impact on you. As you praise Him, it will make a difference in you.

The following are some ways that the incredible power of praise will transform you and your relationship to God:

- *It will set the tone for your praying (Psalm 100:4).* When you pray, you enter God’s presence. You are approaching the great and mighty God of heaven and earth. Praise prepares you for this amazing and supernatural encounter. It causes you to slow down and remember with whom you are speaking. It forces you to slow down and remember whom you are approaching. Too many times we rush into and out of God’s presence. We often practice what I call “grocery list” praying. We have our list, we rush into His presence, go through our list and rush out of His presence. Praise draws you back to focus on whom you are talking to and how amazing and awesome this time is.

➤ *It will build your faith (Matthew 21:22; James 5:15).*

Praise is a faith-strengthening exercise. When you praise Him, you fix your gaze on God. You focus is on His almighty power. You look at His glorious character. Praise turns your eyes solely to God. This can strengthen your faith. It reminds you of how glorious and great He is. It can enable you to trust God in the way that He desires. You weaken your faith when you look only at your circumstances and your resources. Yet, when you lift your eyes to God, it will strengthen and encourage your faith.

➤ *It unleashes God's power into your life (Psalm 22:3).* The Word of God says in **Psalm 22:3**, "But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel." The word "enthroned" means to be powerfully present. When God's people praise Him, He reveals that He is in their midst with great power. God will show Himself strong in behalf of those who praise Him. God manifests His power through praise. In other words, when the praise goes up, the power comes down. As you adore God, you will experience His power.

➤ *It will keep your heart humble (James 4:6).* The Word of God says in **James 4:6**, "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'" God pours out His grace on the individual who humbles himself before Him. How can a person maintain an attitude of humility before God? Praise will keep your heart humble. When you focus on God through praise, you begin to see how great and mighty God is. You begin to see in fresh and new ways how glorious and exalted He is. As this happens, it breaks your pride. You see your sinfulness in a new light. You realize how utterly dependent that you are on God. Praise not only opens your eyes to who God is; it also opens your eyes to who you are. It is a powerful antidote for pride and self-righteousness.

➤ *It can stir you to confess your sin (1 John 1:9).* Your holy Father desires that you confess your sin," If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Praise will lead you down the path of confession and repentance. As you praise Him, you are reminded of His perfection and His holiness. You focus on His greatness and His hatred of evil. This will stir and move your heart to come clean with the sin in your life.

➤ *It can increase your intimacy with God (Psalm 4:3).* Praise enables you to pursue intimacy with God. To praise God, you must grow in your understanding of His character and ways. As you practice praise, it will draw you into a greater intimacy with your God. Without praise, a believer's intimacy with God can stagnate.

➤ *It prepares you to listen to God (1 John 5:14).* Many times we come to God with our own agenda. We then ask Him to adopt it and bless it. Yet, God does not promise to bless our agenda, "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us" (1 John 5:14). The Word of God reveals that we must be submissive to God's will when we pray. How can you learn to be submissive and listen to God? Praise will prepare you to listen and submit to God. As you exalt God, you appreciate His wisdom. As you adore God, you cherish His love. As you magnify God, you come to a fresh understanding of His power and righteousness. This causes you to understand that God is wise, powerful, loving, and good. This in turn should stir you to adjust and yield to your Father.



## The Hindrances To Powerful Praise

God has blessed you with the privilege of knowing Him. He has saved you and opened your eyes to His character that you might adore and honor Him. Praise is your privilege and pursuit.

Yet, there are some factors that can keep you from offering powerful praise to God. These can prevent you from giving God the adoration that He is worthy of and delights in. If you desire to exalt and honor God with praise, you must confront and deal with these hindrances. I call these hindrances "praise busters."

### **PRAISE BUSTER # 1:**

#### ***A LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOD***

One of the reasons that people fail to praise God is because they lack the knowledge of God's character. In order to praise God, you have to know His character. If you do not know who God is and what He is like, how can you honor and adore Him? The more you understand and know God's character, the more that you will praise Him. The depth and weight of your praise to God depends on your understanding of His character. The Word of God says in **Psalm 119:7**, "I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments." The psalmist declares that there is an intimate connection between praise and knowing God's character. God has revealed Himself in the Word. As you grow in your understanding of His character in the Word, you will be able to grow and deepen your praise to God. If you lack understanding of His character, you will not be able to praise Him in deep and rich ways.

### **PRAISE BUSTER #2:**

#### ***A SELF-CENTERED SPIRIT***

The self-centered spirit believes that God exists for me. It is the belief that God has saved me to bless me and help me. If we are not careful, we can develop the tendency to see God as some kind of genie or an indulgent grandfather. God does love you; He wants to bless your life. God desires to help you with your burdens. Yet, your priority is God. When you pray, praise is central and crucial. A self-centered spirit will turn your prayer life into nothing more than requests with an occasional "thank You" thrown in for good measure. If you rush into God's presence, tell Him what's on your list, and then rush out of His presence, it will hinder you from offering powerful praise. Forsake the self-centered spirit that keeps one from offering adoration to your God. Learn to lose yourself in His praise (**Matthew 6:9-11**).

### **PRAISE BUSTER #3:**

#### ***MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT PRAISE***

One of the common hindrances to praise is misunderstanding about praise. Praise and thanksgiving are not the same thing. It is true that they have an intimate connection to each other in the Word. Their close relationship often makes it difficult to make a distinction between the two. They are similar in that they both consist in giving glory to God. Yet, the main distinction is this: giving of thanks focuses what God does while praise focuses on who God is. Praise is selfless; it has absolutely nothing to do with our needs or our wants, "Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand" (**Psalm 95:6-7**). There is no "me" in praise. It finds its delight in God Himself. It is being wholly consumed with God's character. Glorify God by giving thanks for the blessings that He grants in our lives. Yet, regardless of what God does for you, He is worthy of praise. God is, always has been, and always will be worthy to be praised simply because of His character.

### **PRAISE BUSTER #4:**

#### ***A LACK OF COMMITMENT***

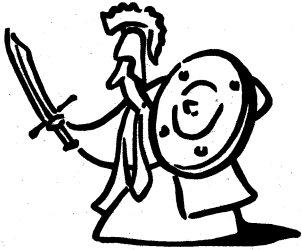
The believer must be disciplined to learn how to praise God. One has to learn how to adore God. It is a pursuit, a growth process for the child of God, "I will sing to the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being" (**Psalm 104:33**). Without a commitment to grow in this area, the believer will remain shallow in his adoration of God. It is great to have the desire to praise God. Yet, one must add the discipline to this desire.

### **PRAISE BUSTER #5:**

#### ***WORLDLINESS***

The Word of God says in **1 John 2:15**, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him." When you are attracted to the world, you will lose your focus on how great a glorious God is. When you love the world, it is impossible for you to have loving adoration of God. Love for the world and adoration for God cannot peacefully coexist in the same heart; one

will take precedence over the other. If you are wrapped up in this world – its possessions, its pursuits, its pleasures – you will not be able to offer the sacrifice of praise that God delights in and desires. Those who desire to offer powerful praise must become enamored by God. He must be your greatest desire, your greatest possession, and your greatest pleasure.



## Praising God In The Midst Of The Battle

As a child of God, you are in a spiritual war, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (**Ephesians 6:12**). Your enemy seeks to attack you, tempt you, and destroy you. He is out to ruin your witness, poison your faith, and take your life.

Yet one of the most powerful weapons that you have in this spiritual war is praise. Praise is a powerful spiritual weapon that can enable you to gain victory in the midst of the battle. It can protect you and help you go on the offensive when you are tempted and attacked by the evil one.

Why is praise a powerful spiritual weapon? The following are some basic reasons by it is a mighty weapon in your arsenal:

- ❖ *It unleashes the power of God into your life* (**Psalms 22:3**). As we saw earlier in the newsletter, God is enthroned in the midst of the praises of His people. When you praise God, God manifests His presence and power. When the praise goes up, the power comes down. This power will sustain you and help you in the midst of your battles. The power of God is the only thing that can help you stand against the enemy and his schemes. This is why Paul says that we must "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (**Ephesians 6:10**).
- ❖ *It confuses the forces of evil* (**2 Chronicles 20:12ff.**). In the Old Testament, praise was

an essential part of the warfare of the people of God. This is illustrated in **2 Chronicles 20**. In this chapter, we are told that a massive army had gathered and planned on attacking Jehoshaphat and Judah. Jehoshaphat responds by seeking the Lord (**2 Chronicles 20:3-4**). God answers by promising victory. Yet, they won this battle in an amazing and unique way. Jehoshaphat had appointed that certain people would sing and praise God as they stood and waited on the Lord (**2 Chronicles 20:22**). When they praised God, it threw the enemy into confusion. The same is true in the spiritual battles of our lives. Our enemy today is not an outward, physical foe, but a spiritual, invisible one. When you praise God, it throws Satan and his forces into confusion. Why? The enemy does not believe that you're going to trust God in the midst of the adversity. He does not believe that you, or anyone else for that fact, will love and serve God because of who He is (**Job 1:9-11**). When you praise God, you are saying, "I will trust Him no matter what. I will serve Him regardless. I love and serve God because of who He is." This throws the enemy into utter confusion. He does not expect this.

- ❖ *It can break the enemy's oppression* (**Acts 16:25-26**). In **Acts 16**, the Word of God reveals that Paul and Silas had been thrown in jail by the Philippian authorities. Satan wanted to bind and hinder their work (**Ephesians 6:12**). They respond in an unusual way to their imprisonment – they praise God (**Acts 16:25**). They are in chains but they adore God. Their praise leads to a miracle, "Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed" (**Acts 16:26**). Their praise of God destroyed the bondage that Satan had placed on them. The same can be true in your life. Your praise of God can weaken and loosen Satan's chains in your life. Satan wants to bind you – weigh your life down with weariness, discouragement, hopelessness, and worthlessness. He longs to enslave you in despair and doubt. But, praise can set you

free. It can break the bondage that Satan wants to place on you.

- ❖ *Satan hates the praise of God (Matthew 4:8-10).* **Matthew 4** shows us that Satan tempted Jesus while He was in the wilderness. One of the temptations had to do with worship. Satan calls on Jesus to worship him. Jesus responded by using the sword of the Spirit, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only shall you serve'" (**Matthew 4:10**). This temptation reveals the heart of Satan. He wants to be worshiped. He wants people to bow down to Him. His desire is for people to exalt him and to carry out his wicked and devious will. For this reason, he hates the praise of God. He cannot stand it when God is adored, cherished, and obeyed. He despises this because this is what he wants. The praise of God rings in his ears; he will not stay when God is exalted. He is silenced and bound by God's praise and exaltation.

In the midst of the battles of your life, praise God. When you are tempted, adore God. When you are struggling, delight in and exalt God. When you are being weighed down by stress and discouragement, magnify God. This powerful spiritual weapon can make a difference in your battles.



## When You Don't Feel Like Praising God

The Word of God says in **Job 5:7**, "Yet man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward." It is certain that we will face adversity in this life. This adversity will extend from the mildly annoying to the tragic and life-altering.

There will be times when you may not feel like praising God. But, God is worthy to be praised in these times also. How can you develop the ability to praise God when you don't

feel like it? In **Job 1:20-22**, the Word of God gives us some principles to help us do just this. Job's response to his stunning adversity gives us insight on how to praise God in midst of pain.

### FIRST PRINCIPLE:

*Praise is not a quick fix for sorrow or grief.*

In **Job 1**, we see that Job endures some remarkable tragedies (**Job 1:14-19**). Within a matter of moments, his whole world was changed. Yet, in the midst of it all, he praises God. In the midst of his pain, he adores the goodness and sovereignty of God. Yet, he also grieves. His praise was not a substitute for his grief (**Job 1:20**). Praise is not putting on a happy face and saying, "Praise the Lord!" It is earnestly adoring God and reaching out to Him in your pain. You're going to suffer and wonder, "Why?" Don't let these things keep you adoring Him; let them drive you to Him. Don't try to put on a front. Express the grief and pain. And, in the midst of this, adore God not as a substitute for your pain but as a statement of your faith.

### PRINCIPLE 2:

*Praise helps you keep the proper perspective.*

Job's praise of God is remarkable (**Job 1:21**). He confesses that God is in control – even in the midst of His adversity. When you face suffering in this life, two questions will come to the forefront, "Why, God?" and "Where are You, God?" Praise will help focus on who God is. It will lift your eyes to the One who reigns over your circumstances. It will build your faith to trust in God who is good wise, righteous, and powerful. Adoring Him will help you keep the proper perspective when adversity and the inevitable questions flood your life.

### PRINCIPLE 3:

*Praise can protect you from blaming God.*

Job's confession of praise protected him from blaming God (**Job 1:22**). He did not sin against God by questioning His love and power. How was He able to do this? He adored God for His goodness and exalted God's sovereignty. Peace does not come from asking why but focusing on whom – your sovereign and good Father.

**PRINCIPLE 4:**

*Praising God in adversity is a choice.*

As you read this text, it is easy to see how Job could have complained about God and His ways. Yet, he chooses to adore God. In the midst of his pain, he makes a determined choice to adore God. In your adversity, you must choose to praise Him. Praising God is not based on your feelings; it's based on your faith. There are no "secrets" to honoring Him in the midst of your adversity. It is a matter of choice because of your faith in Him.

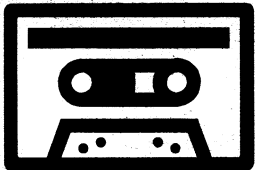
**PRINCIPLE 5:**

*God is always worthy of praise.*

This text reveals that God is always worthy to be praised – even in the face of great adversity. It's easy to get bogged down in what we're feeling and what we're facing in life. But, God never changes. He is always good, wise, kind, and sovereign. He is eternally the same. For this reason, He is worthy to be adored in all the circumstances of life.

**Developing A Heart Of Praise**

This six-week Bible study will help you learn what the Bible teaches about praise and how you can pursue praise daily. This study includes a manual and a tape or CD set. It is ideal for Bible study groups and prayer meeting material. The cost for the study is \$8.00. Please specify if you would like the tapes or CD's. Order yours today from the Prayer Closet!



## Building A Lifestyle Of Praise

What are some practical ways that you can develop a lifestyle of praise? The following are some ways that you can develop and grow your ability to adore God:

(1) *Ask God to give you a heart for praise (Psalm 145:2).* Plead with Him to teach you

how to praise Him. Confess your desire and determination to adore Him.

- (2) *Commit yourself to praising God.* Determine in your heart that you will pursue a lifestyle of praise. Give yourself to adoring God (**Psalm 34:1**).
- (3) *Daily seek the filling of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).* The Holy Spirit is the One who can empower you to praise your Father. As you yield yourself to the Holy Spirit, you will have the power and insight to magnify God.
- (4) *Saturate yourself with the Word of God (Psalm 119:7).* As you read and study the Word of God, you will grow in your understanding of His character. As this happens, it can help you offer rich and deep praise to God.
- (5) *Develop a vocabulary of praise.* A vocabulary of praise is building a list of the names, titles, characteristics, and pictures of God. This vocabulary will enable you to praise God in a variety of ways. It will help you know what to say when you desire to praise Him. For help in building your vocabulary of praise, visit The Prayer Workshop at The Prayer Closet web site ([www.prayerclosetministries.org](http://www.prayerclosetministries.org)). Click on the "Adoration" section.
- (6) *Turn every truth that you learn about God into praise for God.* As you learn about God's character through your personal study and through the preaching and teaching ministry of your church, use those things to praise Him. Let every truth that you learn or are reminded of about God's character move you to adore Him.
- (7) *Rewrite hymns.* Take hymns and put them into your own words.
- (8) *Keep a "Praise Notebook."* A praise notebook is the place where you record the truths that you are learning about God. This will help you build your vocabulary of praise and provide you with rich and fresh ways to honor and adore God.
- (9) *Rewrite portions of Scripture.* You can use the varieties of praise in the Word to build your own praise. Write out in your own words and for your situation what the Scripture is saying.



## The Mississippi Day Of Prayer

The Mississippi Day Of Prayer is **September 4, 2005**. On this day, we are asking churches to pray specifically for Mississippi and the spiritual awakening that we need. It is a call for believers across this state to humble themselves before the Lord, repent, and cry out to God for spiritual awakening and blessing on

this state. We are asking believers of all denominations to pray specifically for Mississippi on **September 4**. We are urging every church in this state to observe this day of prayer and humility before God.

We desire to see God touch Mississippi in a fresh and unique way. Through prayer, we can experience God's blessing and spiritual awakening throughout our state. If we will seek Him for our state, He will touch and change our state.

If you would like to receive a packet of materials for observing The Mississippi Day Of Prayer, please contact us at The Prayer Closet. Or you can download these materials at the web site for A.I.M. The address is [www.awakeninginmiss.com](http://www.awakeninginmiss.com).



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