

#46 “Pause to Praise”

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Sometimes we can find ourselves getting so consumed with activity and busyness that we fail to give God thanks and praise. Praise is not only for Sunday morning during the singing time, and it is not to be offered only when something good happens to us. Man was created to praise God because God deserves glory all the time (Isaiah 48:11). We exist not for ourselves, not to find out who we are, and not to indulge our lusts. We exist to give God praise, to learn about Who He is, and to give Him glory for Who He is and for what He has done, is doing, and will do. In fact, it may well be that the highest, most elating, and most euphoric experiences that we as human beings can enjoy are those moments when God grasps our attention and shouts to us in our hearts, saying, for example, “Look at what I have made. Isn’t it awesome, beautiful, and breathtaking? I thought this up, I designed it, and I brought it into being. Isn’t it great?” When we respond in humble acknowledgement, thanksgiving, and praise, we share God’s joy about Who He is and what He has done.

For example, consider the stars in the night skies. We know they are there, that they are innumerable, and that they are pretty to look at. But have we ever taken a moment just to praise God for His creative work, His genius, His majesty, His vastness, and His power? It is one thing to say that the sky is big and amazing, and it is another to glorify God for His bigness that transcends even the vastness of the universe. It is one thing to try to get our minds around how big the stars actually are even though they are so small from our viewpoint, and it is another altogether to praise God for thinking up the idea of light and for being the Light. *It is not good enough just to acknowledge that the universe has a designer, but the Designer must be praised.*

The more we study the world and, more importantly, the Bible, the more we will be moved to praise. How can a book written over thousands of years by many different human authors be perfectly consistent, coherent, and complete? Only God could do this, and this should move us to praise. How could God become man, die, and then be raised from the dead? It is amazing, and it should move us to praise. Like the stars on a clear night, the heavens speak forth the glory of God (Psalm 19:1), and the created order should move us to praise. Sometimes we will be able to get a glimpse of the wisdom of God as we see in retrospect just how good He has been to us. Sometimes, we see, like David, how the goodness of God has followed us all the days of our lives (Psalm 23:6). This should move us to praise and to exalt God in our hearts. Every time we encounter God in His Word, in His revelation through the creation, or as the Spirit moves in our hearts about the goodness of God, we should pause to praise Him. In fact, as we come to increasingly understand the love, grace, goodness, and power of God, we won’t be able to help but praise. It will be almost instinctive. God wants us to delight in Him (Psalm 37:4) and thereby find our greatest purpose and joy (Psalm 16:11).

The Psalms are full of exhortations to exaltation by writers who can't help but praise God, even when they find themselves in dire predicaments. In fact, the original Hebrew text labeled the book of Psalms as "Praises." Given that this book is the longest in the canon of Scripture, it should be clear to us that God wants praise to be a central part of the believer's life. In fact, Psalm 102:18 says, "This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD." One of the main overarching purposes of the Psalms is to motivate us to praise and to instruct us as to how we should praise.

We must continue the praising of God that has been done for thousands of years in song and music, even singing new songs to the Lord as He works in our hearts and leads us to praise (Psalm 33:3). We can praise God through our old favorite songs, as certainly Israel would have done with their Psalms, but we should also be composing new ones. Even in Revelation 5:9, those in heaven sing to God a new song of praise. God doesn't get old, and if He is getting old, stale, and boring to us, we need to recover true, authentic and Biblical praise. Whether through song, prayer, deed, or any other kind of God-glorifying action, we must intentionally pause to praise. Rather than be consumed with ourselves, we must let ourselves be consumed with the glory of God. Rather than boast in ourselves, we should boast in the Lord. As Psalm 34:2 says, "My soul will make its boast in the LORD." God is great and greatly to be praised (Psalm 48:1, 96:4). May God teach all of us as His children to pause to praise Him, giving Him the glory that is due His glorious name. He has done great things, and He is great. Praise the Lord!