

Songs of Praise

I mean, I was seconds away from colliding head-on with a car,” said Amari to the three other men sitting close to him in the auto repair shop. “I’ve never been so scared in my life.”

Amari had survived a harrowing accident about three weeks prior. The icy, snow-packed roads had caused one SUV to sideswipe Amari’s SUV, which made it spin and cross the center lane. With a desperate cry for help, Amari steered into the spin and was able to right himself and steer away from an oncoming car.

“I know you will be thanking the Lord for that for years to come, young man,” one of the workers said.

“Yes, sir. I certainly will,” said Amari. “I’ve told this story I don’t know how many times. It was nothing but the grace of God that kept me and everyone else safe. No one was injured in the accident. But it’s not only in this situation that God has shown Himself strong on my behalf. God has been good to me all of my life.”

“How old are you?” the man asked.

“I’m 27,” Amari answered.

“Well, you have a lot more living to do,” replied another man, sitting opposite from Amari. “But it’s good to hear young people acknowledge God.”

“Oh yes, sir,” said Amari. “As long as I have breath, I will praise my God.”

1. *Can one-word prayers like “Wow!” be as meaningful or even more meaningful than long prayers (Matt. 6:7–8)? Explain your answer.*

2. *Do you think every prayer should include “Forgive me, help me, thank You, and praise You”? Why or why not?*

3. *What things make you say “Wow” when you think about God?*

Refusing to Trust in People

Psalm 146:1–4 KJV

1 Praise ye the LORD.
Praise the LORD, O my soul.
2 While I live will I praise
the LORD: I will sing praises
unto my God while I
have any being.
3 Put not your trust in
princes, nor in the son of
man, in whom there is no
help.
4 His breath goeth forth,
he returneth to his earth; in
that very day his thoughts
perish.

Psalm 146:1–4 NIV

¹Praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD, my soul.
²I will praise the LORD all my
life;
I will sing praise to my God as
long as I live.
³Do not put your trust in
princes,
in human beings, who cannot
save.
⁴When their spirit departs, they
return to the ground;
on that very day their plans
come to nothing.

The psalmist begins by urging his “soul” to praise God. In the way this ancient writer is thinking, everyone is viewed as an indivisible whole: a person is not only a spirit who temporarily dwells in an earthly body that will be discarded at death. In the Old Testament, the soul denotes the entire person as a living being. God’s people are to worship Him with their entire being.

In verse 2, the poet states that he intends to praise God throughout his life. In the second line, the psalmist declares that he would sing praises to God as long as he lives. He would praise the Lord to his very last breath.

In verses 3 and 4, the poet warns his audience against placing their confidence in powerful people. These leaders are mortals who have no special abilities to deliver anyone from danger (v. 3). One day they, too, will die. All their cherished projects and dreams perish with them (v. 4).

4. *To what extent were God’s children to praise Him?*

5. *What was wrong with God’s children placing their trust in mere mortals?*

Depending Exclusively on God

Psalms 146:5–10 KJV

5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:

6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:

7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The Lord looseth the prisoners:

8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous:

9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

10 The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

Psalms 146:5–10 NIV

⁵Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God.

⁶He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—

he remains faithful forever.

⁷He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets prisoners free,

⁸the LORD gives sight to the blind,

the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,

the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹The LORD watches over the foreigner

and sustains the fatherless and the widow,

but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

¹⁰The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations.

Praise the LORD.

Trusting in human rulers brings sorrow. But when a person turns to “the God of Jacob” (Ps. 146:5) for help, he or she finds eternal joy in salvation. People who put their hope in God are truly “blessed.” This term denotes the abiding presence of joy in those who receive God’s favor.

In verse 6, the psalmist writes that God made “heaven and earth.” He also made the oceans and all the creatures in the seas. He is eternally “faithful” to keep every promise He makes. Believers find assurance in their faithful creator. God is the foundation of their faith and hope.

God defends the cause of the marginalized. He vindicates those who have been crushed by the wicked. He feeds the hungry. He releases the imprisoned (v. 7).

God enables the blind to see. He lifts people’s burdens. He is unfailing in His love for the upright (v. 8). The heavenly king protects the foreigner and sustains the orphan and the widow, but overturns the plans of the wicked.

The psalm closes by declaring God’s eternal reign. “Zion” refers to Jerusalem (the city of David). God eternally remains the king over His eternal city and its inhabitants. His children praise Him for His rule.

6. *What reason is there for looking to God for help?*

7. *What characterizes God’s rule over creation?*

8. *How does God deal differently with the righteous and the wicked?*

Praising the Lord

Psalm 150:1–6 KJV

1 Praise ye the LORD.
Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.
2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.
3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

Psalm 150:1–6 NIV

¹Praise the LORD.
Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.
²Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.
³Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,
praise him with the harp and lyre,

4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
 5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
 6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

⁴praise him with timbrel and dancing,
 praise him with the strings and pipe,
⁵praise him with the clash of cymbals,
 praise him with resounding cymbals.
⁶Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.
 Praise the LORD.

Verse 1 calls on worshipers to praise God in the “sanctuary” and “his mighty heavens.” These calls for a specific place encourage the worshipers to enter into God’s presence. We can almost hear the loud and joyful way it was performed at the Jerusalem temple.

The psalmist then provides reasons to worship God. They can praise Him for His “acts of power,” along with His abundant “greatness” (v. 2). He is able to perform deeds that are impossible for people to do. He is worthy of praise simply for being Himself.

Verses 3 through 5 detail various ways Israel could convey their praise. The psalm invites Israel to praise God by blowing a “trumpet,” playing the “harp and lyre” (two types of stringed instruments), beating the “timbrel” (hand drums), and “dancing.” The psalmist includes another type of “strings,” the “pipe” (or flute), and the “cymbals.” Worship was to be loud and full of joyous music.

Verse 6 summons worshipers and all living things to worship God. God is deserving of praise from every single person and thing that “has breath.”

The psalm ends just as it began: “Praise the LORD.” By beginning and ending the psalm with the same phrase, the psalmist emphasizes the simplicity of its command. The people are to praise God and His name.

9. *What reasons did the psalmist give for offering God praise?*

Trust Him!

For as long as Kelly could remember, she had loved kids. When she was four years old, she would beg her mom to let her hold her baby brother. And when she entered college, she'd tell her friends that all she wanted was to be a mother someday.

But now, she was in her mid-40s. She was single, and had no kids of her own. For a long time, she resented God. She was disappointed in Him. Hadn't she prayed for years to be a mother? Her prayers often seemed to be more in line with solemn laments than joyful worship.

Kelly confessed her pent up feelings to her friend Amanda over dinner one night.

"I've heard of a camp nearby that serves children in foster care. What if you tried that out this summer?" Amanda said.

Kelly was hesitant, but she agreed. When she began working at the camp, she praised God. She finally felt like she found her place. She could connect with the kids, love them, and teach them about Christ. She found some of her closest friends among her coworkers at the camp. She found people who shared the same love for children.

Kelly realized that God had given her a heart for children for a reason. Even though she never had kids of her own, she has dozens of kids to care for at the ministry.

She worshiped God for all He had done in her life. He had provided for her and had comforted her. He was her help, even when she struggled to praise Him with joy.

10. *Can you praise God if you struggle to trust Him? Explain your answer.*

11. *Why is praise for God mandatory?*

12. *When have you seen bad situations be a cause for praise?*

If You Can't Say Something Nice . . .

Did your mother ever say, “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all”? Does praise mean we always say only “nice” things to and about God? Many of the psalms express natural human emotions of confusion, fear, anger, and disappointment to and about God. But they go on to express faith in God—though things might seem hopeless, He will right every wrong.

► *Give a personal example of a situation that incited a negative emotion toward God in you. How was that situation resolved (or how is it being resolved)? What good things can you see that came out of it? If you don’t see changes in external circumstances, can you see how it has developed your character and spirituality? Is there someone in your life who might be encouraged to hear this story and what you learned?*

KEY VERSE

While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.
— Psalm 146:2 KJV

I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.
—Psalm 146:2 NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of November 11 through November 17

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Psalm 28—Give Thanks through Song.
- Tue.** Ephesians 5:1–2, 15–20—Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs.
- Wed.** Psalm 69:1–6, 30–36—Magnify God with Thanksgiving.
- Thu.** Psalm 7:1–2, 6–17—Give Thanks to the Righteous Judge.
- Fri.** 1 Thessalonians 1—Thanks for Faithful Brothers and Sisters.
- Sat.** Philippians 4:4–9—Prayer and Supplication with Thanksgiving.
- Sun.** Psalm 100—Worship the Lord with Gladness.