

praise



yâdâh  
yaw-daw'

a primitive root; used only as denominative from H3027; literally, to use (i.e. hold out) the hand; physically, to throw (a stone, an arrow) at or away; especially to revere or worship (with extended hands); intensively, to bemoan (by wringing the hands):—cast (out), (make) confess(-ion), praise, shoot, (give) thank(-ful, -s, -sgiving).

When we experience awe, beauty, and love, there is some visceral (and almost reflexive) need to respond—a gut-reaction of gratitude or wonder that calls for celebration. A mountain top view or a sunrise over the ocean creates an almost involuntary reaction of praise. Love from a friend or work from a skilled craftsman often compels us to express our admiration. Something inside us is called towards praise.

There is a lot of joy found in observation, in taking things in. It's why people don't usually turn around on the trail before they've reached the viewpoint. But to move from observation to praise, there has to be another step: taking those raw, reactionary feelings and giving them direction.

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the people expressed their joy and thankfulness by waving branches and throwing them at his feet. It was a physical and outward expression of what was happening internally.

To 'take in' is only one part. It is good and healthy to experience the goodness of God and treasure those moments in your heart. But praising God, the creator and lover of the universe, is not always going to be a quiet and introspective act. It is, by definition, an expression.

*The Lord is my strength and  
my shield; my heart trusts  
in him, and he helps me.  
My heart leaps for joy, and  
with my song I **praise** him.*

*Psalm 28:7*

- *When in your life have you experienced something so beautiful that you couldn't keep it to yourself?*
- *Have you ever been so overwhelmed with goodness that you've been uncomfortable, or even hurt?*
- *Read John 12:1-17*
- *Why do you think so many people performed such strong, and sacrificial, acts of praise to Jesus?*
- *What is your favorite way to praise God (that is not personal, internal prayer)?*
- *What did God do in your life today that is worthy of being praised?*

# hâlal

haw-lal'

a primitive root; to be clear (orig. of sound, but usually of color); to shine; hence, to make a show, to boast; and thus to be (clamorously) foolish; to rave; causatively, to celebrate; also to stultify:—(make) boast (self), celebrate, commend, (deal, make), fool(-ish, -ly), glory, give (light), be (make, feign self) mad (against), give in marriage, (sing, be worthy of) praise, rage, renowned, shine

Praise is always preceded by something, whether it's an experience, knowledge, or a relationship. True praise implies worthiness. Someone has done something (or inherently is) worthy of celebrating, and so we celebrate. When it is empty, done in an attempt to flatter or coerce, or only given out of obligation, it means nothing. If you were to heap empty compliments on a friend just because you thought that's what they wanted to hear, you only harm yourself, your friend, and your relationship.

It's the same with God. He does not call us to praise because he needs reassurance, or because we have a part we're required to play in order to maintain a relationship. Empty praise to the one who knows your heart is less than useless. We are steered toward praise because he is worthy.

In Scripture, when we're invited to praise God, we find a list of His attributes. He is full of glory, having spoken the universe into existence. He is great, bigger and wider than we could imagine. He is wise and powerful, creating and fulfilling justice. He is merciful. He is faithful. He is good.

We praise God for who he is, but also for what he has done. He saves us from darkness, providing relief amidst our distress. He provides what we need to go on when we feel empty, alone, and helpless. He is Jesus, who gave everything to save us from our sin. He is the Holy Spirit, who empowers and comforts us daily.

To try to list all of God's characteristics and accomplishments is impossible. But in attempting to do so, we remind ourselves of who we love and serve, and are able to offer genuine, honest praise to the one who is always worthy.

*I called to the Lord, who is  
worthy of **praise**, and have  
been saved from my enemies.*

*2 Samuel 22:4*



- *Read Revelation 4*
- *What does this passage reveal about the character of God?*
- *Where do words fall short in trying to describe the majesty of the Lord?*
- *Which characteristic of God (holiness, mercy, faithfulness, etc.) do you rejoice in the most?*
- *Read Matthew 17:1-8*
- *What was the disciples' reaction to seeing Jesus transfigured?*
- *Does Jesus' holiness ever make you feel unworthy of his presence?*

# zâmar

zaw-mar'

a primitive root; properly, to touch the strings or parts of a musical instrument, i.e. play upon it; to make music, accompanied by the voice; hence to celebrate in song and music:—give praise, sing forth praises, psalms

If we're being honest, hearing about the goodness of God doesn't always mean anything to us. When we find ourselves navigating life's difficulties, it may not seem like God is worthy of praise at all. His sovereignty feels weighty, his goodness distant, his help never arriving. And while raising our hands and shouting praise may come naturally in our highs, it can be the last thing on our mind at our lows.

Praise includes, but is also in spite of, our feelings. It is not dependent upon anything we can bring, but only on the reality of God's worthiness. Nothing about him is conditional upon our circumstances, actions, or feelings.

You will not always want to lift your voice in thanks. Life can be painful and confusing. That's part of being human in a fallen world. We're never asked to ignore the bad in the world; we don't have to pretend to never suffer. But though all that, God remains the same good, loving God he has always been.

Praise is not just a reaction, it's also a choice. Like a musician who still plays his instrument when uninspired, we also can practice praise. Reminding yourself of the truth of God's character, even when he seems absent, can lead you to a place of peace and rest in his love. If God is faithful, then he is who he says he is. In the highs, and the lows.

*I will sing to the Lord all  
my life; I will sing **praise**  
to my God as long as I live.*

*Psalm 104:33*

- *Read Hebrews 13:15-16*
- *What is a 'sacrifice of praise?' What does it look like for you?*
- *How do you find God's goodness in difficult seasons?*
- *Read Philippians 4:10-13*
- *How does knowing that Paul wrote those words from prison affect your interpretation of this famous verse?*
- *Does occasionally 'going through the motions' help you re-center yourself?*
- *Do you tend to be led into praise by your heart, or by your mind?*

# shâbach

shaw-bakh'

a primitive root; properly, to address in a loud tone, i.e. (specifically) loud; figuratively, to pacify (as if by words):—commend, glory, keep in, praise, still, triumph.

Praise is a strong and powerful weapon against despair. By keeping the reality of God's character near the forefront of our hearts and minds, we maintain a healthy perspective of the world. We are given the freedom to feel and express our pain, but we are also free from dwelling in it. We mourn, but we mourn as those who have hope. A life rooted in praise is a bigger, grander, holier thing than mere satisfaction with our circumstances.

When the nature of God is good, all truth-telling is praise. We aren't naive or ignoring problems, but keeping them in perspective. It's never said to be easy. Choosing to praise God in every circumstance is hard, but many things that are good are also hard.

Going all in and discovering who God is, and who he says he is, will lead to discovering more things to rejoice in. The more we look, the more there is to see.

*Because your love is better than  
life, my lips will **glorify** you.*

*Psalm 63:3*



- *Is praise a part of your regular, personal time with God? What does it look like?*
- *Can praise be separate from gratitude?*
- *Read Psalm 86:1-13*
- *We generally value honesty when it comes to confession or expressing fear or pain. But is there a way to be brutally honest in praise?*
- *Read Habakkuk 3:17-19*
- *What is the difference in praise as a reaction, and praise as a choice?*
- *How can praise become a habit?*

