

Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

We encounter so many people who can never see the bright side of life; their glass is always half empty. Many Christians try and justify their negativity on the state of the world around them, and when they look around the world they can find plenty of evidence to support their view. Some argue that the answer to negativism is positive thinking, although there is a flaw in this approach: And the flaw is that positive thinking ***Leaves God out, because positive thinking is a person centred mental process.*** Clearly, the humanist approach to always look on the bright side of life is inadequate. The Biblical approach to negative thinking is to be God centred in our thinking.

As we focus on God in every situation, we will become people characterized by praise: ***Praise is the solution to pessimism!*** We should make every effort to focus on praising God, and you may be thinking that this sounds very much like positive thinking but it's not. We have to will ourselves to think positively and to ignore our problems, it's a mental exercise to think only on the good. But the ability to praise God is not a matter of will, it's an indication of how God centred we are in our lives. Psalm 100 is a short exclamation of praise and the writer of the Psalm is shouting for joy in acknowledgement that he is one of God's people.

Psalm 100 doesn't focus on how we are feeling, or how we are exercising our willpower to feel better about ourselves; the Psalm focused purely on what God has done for us.

The writer of Psalm 100 is not self-centred but God centred, and a God centred person will be a person of praise, and they will focus on God in every situation. They will give Him thanks for everything they are and do. Such a person will demonstrate a strong faith in God. *For the Lord is good and His love endures forever. His faithfulness continues through all generations.* What a wonderful promise! It doesn't matter how we respond or whether we are having a good day or not; God's love ensures forever and His faithfulness will continue through all generations. Surely, this is something worth celebrating. Surely, God's enduring love and faithfulness are reasons to praise Him? And this leads us to Psalm 150.

Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing. Praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD. Amen

Psalm 150 is the last Psalm in the Bible and God doesn't want us to miss the priority of praising Him. The last five Psalms start with the word Hallelujah, which means praise God. In Psalm 150 we are called to praise God thirteen times, and this Psalm gives us the where, why, how and who of praise. I know we've touched on this before, but spending a few more minutes considering how we praise God won't do us any harm.

Praising God doesn't just mean singing and I am certainly not about to suggest that you go about singing all the time. We can praise God through prayer, sacrificial service and giving. We praise God when we live trying to imitate Christ to the best of our ability. So the place where we praise God is everywhere, and not just for an hour on a Sunday. Praise should characterise how we live our lives, it should be an attitude and not just a temporary action.

Where are we to Praise God? Everywhere! Why are we to praise God? V2 of the Psalm 150 answers that question. *Praise Him for the mighty things He has done, praise His supreme greatness.* We praise God for that He has done for us: He is our creator and provider. He forgives us repeatedly and He sent His only beloved Son Jesus to die for our sins, that we may be forgiveness and have eternal life. ***Surely, these amazing acts by God are the reason Why we should praise His Holy name?***

We know the Where and Why of praise, and we should understand they how of praise. V3 to V5 lists musical instruments which may give the impression that one has to be a musician to be able to praise the Lord and we need to read on to V6. ***Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.*** So not being a musician doesn't give us an excuse not to praise God. Let everything that has breath, means that all living creatures are to praise the Lord. We are to praise God with everything we have, with our whole body, spirit and mind. In our dour Scottish culture, we are quicker to show our reserve and restraint, then our exuberance and joy, unless we are at a concert of football match oddly enough. If we come to church thinking that this is a place of quiet and restraint, then there are times when that is appropriate but when we worshipping God our praise should demonstrate our love and appreciation of God. I've shown this clip of US Marines before, but here are macho men giving praise to God without restraint. ***How are we to praise God? We are to praise God with our heart, soul and mind, and without restraint!***

These are the days of Elijah clip

The writer of Psalm 100 and 150 was clear on Who it is we are to praise, which is of course our Heavenly Father, God. There can be a tendency for us to be overly familiar with God and not give Him the respect He is due. We are caught in a tension between wanting to know God more and understand His ways better, but this can lead to us losing our sense of mystery and respect for God, and this is understandable but wrong.

When I first meet someone, I have a natural respect for them and because I don't know them, there is a sense of mystery about them. I wonder what their characteristics are like, and what we have in common. But the more I get to know the person, the more familiar I become with them, and when I discover what they are like, my respect changed based on what I have learned about them. We can make the mistake of treating God like this and a good example of this is the way we recite the Lord's Prayer. I suspect that there are times when we don't actually think about what we are praying because the words are so familiar, we just trot it out as we have done since our school days. But if we read this prayer closely, we will discover we are praying some profound requests and truths.

So it with praising God. We gather each Sunday to sing our hymns and songs and this ritual has become so familiar that we have possibly lost the meaning of what it is we are doing, and who it is we are praising! Who are we praising? We are praising our Lord God who is the supreme creator and ruler of the universe. Our God is so almighty, so unknowing and mysterious that we can never claim to know Him in the way we may know a friend of neighbor. *God is greater than any living creature.* We have no right to become over familiar with God and while we may express our desire to want know Him more, it would be more accurate to express our desire to know His ways more. So if this over familiarity with God is inappropriate, so if the way we praise Him as if this is a dull routine!

Praise God by routine is not what God demands of us. Psalm 150 instructs *Praise the Lord all living creatures.* The fact that God commands us to praise Him means that praise cannot be based on our moods or our surroundings, such as church; praise cannot be based on our circumstances and whether we are having a good day or not. Praise is a matter of obedience to our great God. It stems from deliberately focusing on His goodness. It's the result of being willfully God centred in our thinking and being.

According to God's word in Psalm 150, if we are breathing than praise God is an imperative and not an option. In conclusion, the message of Psalm 100 and 150 is that God's people should be caught up in praising God every day and in every way, first individually and then corporately.

Some hints which I've covered before, on how we may start to live a life of praise: *First as individuals* - Consider spending the beginning of each day with a short quiet time, and this doesn't need to be something that's lengthy or onerous. Start your day with a short Bible reading, many people find daily Bible notes helpful for this, and then pray that God will guide you through your day, pray for others at the same time. This shouldn't take you more than ten to fifteen minutes, and if we can't give God fifteen minutes of our day which contains 1440 minutes, then surely there's something wrong with our faith life! Before you eat, even if it's a quick sandwich at lunch time, say a silent prayer of thanksgiving for all God provides for us. End your day thanking God for bringing you through it, and pray for peace for yourselves and those close to you. It's not much but you will surprised how this will help you focus more on God. Remember I started out saying that praising God wasn't just about singing hymns, it's more about how we live as God's people.

And then praising God corporately – Instead of coming to church as a duty or a chore, consider that a privilege we have in that we can worship God in freedom, without fear of persecution or someone telling us how to worship. When we sing hymns and songs try to focus on the words you are singing and let the meaning of these words sink into your hearts and minds. The tunes not important, tunes are only vehicles to carry the words. The words are important for they have meaning and they express our praise. And when we pray together, listen to the words being prayed and silently agree with that's being said as if it's your prayer that is being made.

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(1936 words)