

Forget Why You Came

Moving from Anxious Groaning to Joyful Ruling

By Jason Hershey



Let's face it. We have our prayer lists. Things are urgent. Yet we all know prayer has to be more than a 9-1-1 call to the Omnipotent Ambulance. Crying out to the Lord and calling upon Him in our time of need is part of the great grace God has given us. However, prayer is about intimate relationship, not just perpetual emergency calls. Nothing keeps our prayer lives honest quite like our attitude toward spending time just praising the Lord!

In the fall of 2011, God impressed upon me this vision for the coming election year in 2012: "Do like King David. Put up a worship tent in the Capitol with continuous praise 24/7 for 40 days."

Miraculously, God opened a door for us to set up a tent, radiating His praise on the White House Ellipse and in view of our president's back porch. We got a permit from the National Park Service to hold continuous worship, day and night, for 40 days right up until election day in November.

At first, it seemed counterintuitive to how I felt. My heart was heavy and I wanted to lie on the ground and moan because of the condition of our nation. But I knew it was time to rise up and praise the Lord!

Caught Up

Stunning. Absolutely beautiful. The most heart-stopping, attractive, gorgeous Being in all of existence. The One of color, poetry, romance, and music. The One of power, might, and strength. The One of care, compassion, and kindness. The One who is the faithful provider, the cloaking protector, and the giver of every good gift. The One who is the revealer of mysteries. God is love. Holy is He! He is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer. He is my strength and my song. Oh, and by the way, He's a singer. Have you heard His songs? Oh, my! And His eyes are piercing—like a stream of boiling water into a pile of snow. They melt me. This is how I feel when I get caught up in worshiping and praising my God.

The power of praise is God Himself. Looking at God—and meditating on who He is and His wonderful Kingdom—yields a natural reaction to praise the Lord. It's as easy as eating.

Gazing at the beauty of the Lord leads us into greater closeness of relationship. He is so attractive. When we see Him, there is a gravitational pull that draws us in and makes us praise Him even more. Isn't that what this is all about? Redeeming the great dream of Eden? God and man walking together?

Praise from the Heart

The power of praise is the realigning of our priorities. Prayer is all about Him and for His glory. Psalm 27:4 says,

“One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.”

If we come to the Lord for any other reason, praise has a way of ironing that out. We forget why we came when we lose ourselves around His throne.

Value obligates. My little four-year-old girl Avella is the sweetest package of cute you’ll ever see. She’s “worthy” of those hugs and kisses. I don’t need to work up the desire to do so! The bottom-line truth of why we praise the Lord is simply this: Because He is worthy! Jesus is so amazing!

Praise is unto and for the Lord. As David would say, “Bless the Lord, O my soul.” All praise must be Jesus-centered. The way we lose ourselves in praise is to make it about God and not us. The purpose for praise is not our spiritual high of peace and joy, or even answers to prayer, though those are great rewards. Praise is primarily for Him. Don’t you just want to make the heart of the Lord swell with delight?

As a young man, my life’s goal changed the day I came to the revelation that God had opened Himself up to be emotionally affected by me. He grieves when I sin. He is blessed when I praise Him. Though His love for me is unconditional, His degree of pleasure or grief over me is directly related to my heart toward Him.

When I praise Him, from the heart, I know it blesses Him. This is also a great reward and purpose for praise. Let’s make the heart of the Lord swell like never before! Let’s be a generation that ministers to Him.

Puny Little Giant

When you get caught up in who God is, you forget all else.

That big Goliath in our lives turns into a little twerp as you see the Omnipotent One standing in the heavens towering above that puny little giant! The great hymn by Helen H. Lemmel says it best: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His Glory and Grace."

When we get drawn into His Presence, suddenly our prayer lists don't seem as desperate. Instead, we see them in faith as answered prayers!

Praying in faith is Intercessory Prayer 101. I have a personal prayer rule: "Don't pray something out unless you actually believe it's going to happen!" Praising the Lord and meditating on who He is opens not only the possibility of good coming forth (that's called "hope"), but praise launches us into the assurance of what we hope for, that place of faith. Praise is the knockout punch to unbelief.

As we pray, we want to be sure we are praying from a place with the heart of the Lord for people or a situation, rather than praying from a place of our anxieties over something. "Do not be anxious about anything" (Phil. 4:6). "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts" (Ps. 139:23). Praise shifts us from a place of anxious groaning to joyful ruling in prayer.

It's no wonder that Jesus taught us to pray, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name" as the entry door of everything in His school of prayer. Prayers and songs of praise open the door and put everything else into perspective.

Tuning Fork

In the fall of 2011, Jesus met me in this verse: "Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous" (Ps. 118:15). I had to ask myself, "Then why does it sound like

despair and defeat coming from my tent?" Years of contending, fasting, and prayer in Washington, D.C., had taken its toll. I was spiritually grumpy at this "moral decline." This was my repentance moment, when I changed my mind. I am changing my tone! I decided. Praise broke through.

A rally began in my soul. God gave me eyes of faith. Many years of solemn assemblies has got to mean something to the God of heaven. The remnant in America is not small. God answers humility, prayer, repentance, and seeking His face by healing lands. There comes a time in any prayer journey when you just have to receive your answers to prayer in faith, and begin to praise the Lord for it.

I decided, in faith, "I'm praising the Lord for the revival of America!" I may have been a bit early, but hey, people celebrate Christmas in November, knowing for sure that Christmas is coming.

The Lord impressed upon me, "It's time for the joyful assembly, like Hebrews 12:22," which says, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly . . ." (emphasis added).

It was out of this repentant "tone change" that God gave me the dream of David's Tent DC as a response to my question, "How do I intercede for America?" David brought the ark of the Presence into his capital city, put it under a tent, and hired more than 4,000 musicians and singers to minister to the Lord continuously around the ark. This praise tent inspired me.

It was a miracle when the National Park Service gave us a 40-day permit on the White House Ellipse, a prime location that we didn't even ask for! This indicated to me that God is truly jealous for praise! Like David, we set up a 24/7 worship tent for 40 days prior to the elections. "Just Praise for 40 Days" was our motto. We were joined by 166 different worship teams.

An estimated 20,000 people cycled through that worship tent for what ended up being 1,000 hours of continuous praise rockets to heaven. One of the primary anthems of the tent was the hymn, "Come Thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace; streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise."

"Just Praise for 40 Days" caused my heart to rise. I would get lost in the beauty of Jesus and all His wonderful attributes. By the end of the 40 days, it was really hard, in my humanity, to get overjoyed or depressed depending which candidates won the elections. My emotions were anchored by a deep joy that is beyond anything this world could add or detract.

Praise does that. It's hard to be depressed when you are lost in the presence of Jesus. The urgency of all things happening in the U.S. in 2012 were overshadowed by who God is.

Rally Caps!

Let's rise like super-fans when their team is down in the ninth inning. Normal fans will just pack up their bags and leave the ballpark early to beat the traffic. But super-fans use a whole different strategy. They turn their hats inside out and backwards to make rally caps. They cheer their team on to victory. Super-fans take a purposeful posture of changing the tone from defeat to victory, even before the victory has fully manifested. This is the power of praise.

Let's praise the Lord! Let's cheer for Him big time. He will come and bring a great victory. Jesus always wins, even in the tenth inning. Let's be super-fans of our victorious King! Praise is no longer just a way into "real prayer." Oh, no! Praise is making a comeback with Jesus in the center.

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Finding Words for Extravagant Worship

By Dave Butts

Years ago I went to a conference where I learned something so significant about how to worship God that it completely changed my prayer life. Up to that point, when I thought about praise and worship, I automatically believed it to be corporate in nature—a practice that was done on Sunday morning surrounded by other Christians. Suddenly, after years of routine, I was being challenged biblically to make praise a regular part of my personal prayer life.

What happened next is now a humorous story embedded in my memory. I began to pray: “Lord, I praise You. I worship You. Lord, I praise You. I worship You. Lord—I don’t know what else to say!” It was a frustrating situation that awakened me to my inability to worship God through prayer.

My basic problem was that I lacked a vocabulary for praise. I was so used to praise being something that was sung using a book or a screen in the presence of others that I didn’t even know what to say.

So I “cheated.” I turned to Psalms and began to use the portions that dealt with praise and worship as the text for my own prayers. It wasn’t long before I realized the freedom that praying through the psalms of David gave me. It gave me ways to express my heartfelt love for the Lord that stretched my prayer life beyond its limited boundaries. It wasn’t cheating but, in fact, probably the best way for me to learn to bring

prayers of praise into my own lifestyle.

The King and His Kingdom

David says of himself, "I am a man of prayer" (Ps. 109:4). Reading Psalms leaves no doubt as to the accuracy of that statement.

David was known as a warrior king. But this fascinating warrior was also a poet, musician, and spiritual journalist. His prayers and songs make up the largest part of the Book of Psalms. Through the years, millions have been led passionately into the presence of God through the simple words of David's prayers. Psalm 145 (see page 22) is a Kingdom prayer that is ultimately about two things:

1. Worshiping God.

Psalm 145 is a psalm of wholehearted, enthusiastic, nothing-held-back praise! This hymn to the Great King extols the Lord for His mighty acts, for His awesome glory, and His benevolence to His people. King David's praise is lavish and all encompassing. His deepest worship is expressed in this magnificent prayer of praise!

Praise is an important element of prayer. It is communicating to God how we feel about Him. It is the kind of prayer that pleases the heart of God immensely. The uniqueness of Psalm 145 is that we can pray it verbatim to our Father, knowing that every word contains His perfect will, plan, and purposes. Psalm 145 gives us an expanded, descriptive vocabulary with which to give the King of the universe the praise He so deserves and delights in.

2. The Advance of the Kingdom of God.

The testimony of praise can result in the salvation of the lost. Praise is an acknowledgment to the nations of who God

is! This is a psalm of testimony to all creatures on the face of the earth, “so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom” (Ps. 145:12, emphasis added).

One important purpose of praising God is so that others will know Him and give Him glory! Praise extolling the Lord’s Kingdom gives Him glory and serves as a testimony to others. This honors Him and brings the lost into the Kingdom, which also brings Him glory!

Everything David wrote in Psalm 145 points toward the glory of God’s Kingdom. It gives a path to the unsaved through the praises of God’s people. We are the guideposts on that path. Our testimony takes unbelievers step by step into His Kingdom.

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Psalm 145 A Psalm of Praise of David

1 I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name forever and ever.2 Every day I will praise you and extol your name forever and ever.3 Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom.4 One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.5 They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—and I will meditate on your wonderful works.6 They tell of the power of your awesome works—and I will proclaim your great deeds.7 They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.8 The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love.9 The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.10 All your works praise you, Lord; your faithful people extol you.11 They tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might,12 so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.13 Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures through all

generations. The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does.¹⁴ The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down.¹⁵ The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time.¹⁶ You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.¹⁷ The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does.¹⁸ The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.¹⁹ He fulfills the desires of those who fear him; he hears their cry and saves them.²⁰ The Lord watches over all who love him, but all the wicked he will destroy.²¹ My mouth will speak in praise of the Lord. Let every creature praise his holy name forever and ever.