

FLYING CLOSER TO THE FLAME

STUDY FOURTEEN

Let's Just Praise the Lord

Psalm 146–150

Those who praise God are realistic people who live in realistic times, but their hearts overflow with joy

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

WE culminate our series on flying closer to the flame with praise. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, worship comes naturally, doesn't it? God “planted eternity in the human heart,” the writer of Ecclesiastes observed (Ecclesiastes 3:11). That eternal part of us yearns to connect with our eternal God. Praise is the Spirit's pathway that leads us to the presence of God, where our souls feel most at home.

The last five psalms in the book of Psalms are our text. Because each psalm begins and ends with the call to worship, *hallelujah*, we might think of these psalms as the “Hallelujah Chorus” of the Scriptures—a fitting finale to send us out soaring on the wings of praise.

**PREPARE YOUR HEART**

Begin with a prayer inviting the Lord to reveal Himself through His Word.

Father, show me the glory of Your nature through my study. I long for a fresh vision of who You are so that I may worship You with my whole heart today. In Jesus' name, amen.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The book of Psalms is an ancient Hebrew collection of praise songs written by various lyricists over a span of a thousand years. For more background, read the overview article, “*Psalms*,” at [insight.org](https://www.insight.org), and review the chart that accompanies the article.

Psalm 146–150 crowns the book with a repeating refrain—“Praise the Lord!” This invocation opens and closes each psalm and is a translation of the Hebrew, *hallelujah*. This compound word contains two terms: *halel*, meaning “to boast,” and *Yah*, the three-letter word representing the Hebrew name of God. With this jubilant exultation, the psalmist leads worshipers in some of the loftiest expressions of praise in all the Bible.



Observation: The When, Who, Where, How, and Why of Praise

In *Searching the Scriptures*, we first read our text slowly and carefully, observing the when, who, where, how, and why of a passage. In Psalm 146–150, each psalm emphasizes one of these five facets. Taken as a whole, then, these praise songs offer us a complete experience of worship.

When to Praise—Psalm 146

Read *Psalm 146*. When do we praise the Lord, according to 146:2?



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Even when we are at our lowest point, *especially then*, we praise the Lord who is our helper and source of hope (Psalm 146:5). What desperate circumstances do you observe in the list in *146:7–9*, and what help and hope does the Lord give?

When we're under a load of care, we usually don't praise. But in the Christian life, God has one formula to keep us joyful when we're under the load, and that's praise. Praise harmonizes with joy. Without one, we will never have the other. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Whom We Praise—Psalm 147

This psalm reminds us “to sing praises to our God” (Psalm 147:1), not people. We need that reminder, don't we? We tend to idolize people for their beauty, ingenuity, and talents. Even in church, the limelight can shift from the song to the singer, from the truth of God's Word to the eloquence of the preacher.

Read *Psalm 147*. Notice how the psalmist fixes our gaze on the Lord and doesn't let us look away. Write down the verbs the psalmist uses to describe the Lord's achievements, power, and character.

We are so enamored with praising others that to not praise people when we come together has become unusual. God is pleased when we praise Him! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Where We Praise—Psalm 148

Where is the best place to worship? A cathedral with vaulted ceilings and stained-glass windows? In *Psalm 148*, the psalmist tours us through the most inspiring worship centers, and none of them were made by human hands. Read the psalm and log the places you visit and the marvels you see—all formed into being by “his command” (Psalm 148:5).

God gave us the beauty of this earth to prompt praise to Him. Where do we praise the Lord? Everywhere we go! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

How We Praise—Psalm 149

The fourth psalm in this parade of praise instructs us how. *Read 149* and write down what you find.

There is a freshness and a freedom that comes in praise. When the Spirit of God prompts you in your prayer time, just enjoy it! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Why We Praise—Psalm 150

The final psalm wraps the psalter in a golden bow. Read *Psalm 150* and list the two reasons that sum up the infinite number of reasons to fill God's sanctuary with the sounds of worship.

We can spend eternity recounting what God has done and who He is—"his mighty works" and "unequaled greatness" (Psalm 150:2). There is no limit to the praiseworthiness of our King!

Here's a simple formula for worship. Praise God for His work—what He does. His Word—what He says. His person—who He is. And His plan—what He has arranged. With that, you've covered all the bases. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Worship through Music

The psalmist instructs us in Psalm 150 to worship the Lord with "a blast of the ram's horn," "the lyre," "the tambourine," "strings and flutes," and "loud clanging cymbals" (Psalm 150:3–5). Can you imagine those ancient instruments blaring all at once? What a lively racket!

What does it mean to worship the Lord through music in our culture?



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What biblical principle can we use as a guideline regarding music in worship?

Music may sound different today than in David's day, but as a means of worship, music transcends culture and time. God loves hearing our worship through music. Can the same be said of our worship through dance?



Correlation: Worship through Dance

Read the account of David dancing before the ark in [2 Samuel 6:12–15](#). Other kings would have walked or ridden in a stately manner ahead of the ark, but not David. He traded his royal robes and crown for a basic priest's linen ephod and danced "with all his might" before His King (2 Samuel 6:14).

We're not David leading the ark of the covenant, and the setting is not ancient Israel; however, there are principles to glean from David's exuberance. What universal principle about worship can you write based on David's dancing before the Lord?

When is the last time you danced for the praise of God? There are times when we're so overwhelmed with praise that we have to release it. I've danced all over the living room and the den in praise. I had to dance to get it out! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Worship When We're Filled with the Spirit

When we're filled with the Spirit, our praise wells up from the deepest part of our being and spills over in song and, yes, sometimes dance. The point isn't so much about the way we worship but about the joy in our worship—joy that comes from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

As you wrap up this series, think about the ways in which the Spirit prompts your praise.

When do you praise? Try worshiping during the ordinary parts of your day. How might you do that?

Whom do you praise? What reminder might help you to sing the praises of people less and the praises of God more?



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Where do you praise? For the psalmist, the grandest cathedral for worship was creation, but you can praise God anywhere and anytime—in your car, your living room, or in your backyard while weeding the flower bed. Where will you worship today?

How do you praise? The psalmist urges us to loose our spiritual joy. What might you do to free yourself up to worship with new songs and in new ways?

Why do you praise? Follow Pastor Chuck's formula to give substance to your worship. Praise God for His *work*—what He does. His *Word*—what He says. His *person*—who He is. And His *plan*—what He has arranged. List a few reasons for praise below.



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Now as the Spirit fills your heart with irrepressible joy, don't hold back. *Praise the Lord!*

*How good to sing praises to our God!
How delightful and how fitting!* (Psalm 147:1)



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, it is good for me to praise You with my whole being—mind, heart, body, and soul. Stir in me joy that can't be contained. Fill me with Your Spirit and set my heart free to sing the wonders of Your love as long as I live, with my dying breath, and through eternity! In Jesus' name, amen.

