

Praising God Elevates Our Expectations

Message 03 of 03 in the series: "Power of Praise"

A. We often have low expectations/no expectations that God understands our needs or will actually answer our prayers.

"...Teacher, I brought my son so you could heal him. He is possessed by an evil spirit that won't let him talk. And whenever this spirit seizes him, it throws him violently to the ground. Then he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast out the evil spirit, but they couldn't do it.' Jesus said to them, 'You faithless people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.' So they brought the boy. But when the evil spirit saw Jesus, it threw the child into a violent convulsion, and he fell to the ground, writhing and foaming at the mouth. 'How long has this been happening?' Jesus asked the boy's father. He replied, 'Since he was a little boy. The spirit often throws him into the fire or into water, trying to kill him. Have mercy on us and help us, if you can.' **'What do you mean, "If I can"?' Jesus asked. 'Anything is possible if a person believes.'** The father instantly cried out, 'I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!'" Mark 9:17-24 (NLT)

"...**you don't have what you want because you don't ask God for it.** And even when you ask, you don't get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure." James 4:2b-3 (NLT)

Note: Believing that God exists is NOT the same as having a trusting, personal relationship with Him.

"You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder." James 2:19 (NIV)

B. Praising God elevates our expectations because it elevates our confidence in God.

Praise = expressing to God our admiration and understanding of His worth, bragging/boasting about His amazing deeds and the wonderful characteristics of His divine nature

1. Praising God reminds us that He is all-powerful, and He rescues His people when they call on Him.

"I love you, Lord; you are my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my savior; my God is my rock, in whom I find protection. He is my shield, the power that saves me, and my place of safety. **I called on the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and he saved me from my enemies.**"

Psalm 18:1-3 (NLT)

Note: People who praise God *expect Him* to help them overcome gigantic problems.

"Goliath walked out toward David with his shield bearer ahead of him, sneering in contempt at this ruddy-faced boy. 'Am I a dog,' he roared at David, 'that you come at me with a stick?' And he cursed David by the names of his gods. 'Come over here, and I'll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!' Goliath yelled. David replied to the Philistine, 'You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! **And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people**, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord's battle, and he will give you to us!'" 1 Samuel 17:41-47 (NLT)

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ...No, in all these things **we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.**" Romans 8:35 & 37 (NIV)

Life Application: "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you." 1 Peter 5:7 (NLT)

2. Praising God reminds us that He is always faithful, and He always keeps His promises.

"...I, Daniel, learned from reading the word of the Lord, as revealed to Jeremiah the prophet, that Jerusalem must lie desolate for seventy years. So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and fasting... 'O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! **You always fulfill your covenant and keep your promises of unailing love** to those who love you and obey your commands."

Daniel 9:2-4 (NLT)

Note: People who praise God *expect Him* to be faithful and good even when we are faithless and sinful. "O Lord our God, you brought lasting honor to your name by rescuing your people from Egypt in a great

display of power. But we have sinned and are full of wickedness. In view of all your faithful mercies, Lord, please turn your furious anger away from your city Jerusalem, your holy mountain. All the neighboring nations mock Jerusalem and your people because of our sins and the sins of our ancestors... O my God, lean down and listen to me. Open your eyes and see our despair. See how your city—the city that bears your name—lies in ruins. **We make this plea, not because we deserve help, but because of your mercy.** O Lord, hear. O Lord, forgive. O Lord, listen and act! For your own sake, do not delay, O my God, for your people and your city bear your name.” Daniel 9:15-19 (NLT)

Note: People who praise God *expect Him* to always do what is right and best even if it's not done the way we would do it or in our timeframe. “As for me, I look to the Lord for help. **I wait confidently for God to save me**, and my God will certainly hear me.” Micah 7:7 (NLT)

Life Application: “One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. ‘There was a judge in a certain city,’ he said, ‘who neither feared God nor cared about people. A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, “Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.” The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, “I don’t fear God or care about people, but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!”’ Then the Lord said, ‘Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don’t you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, **how many will he find on the earth who have faith?**’” Luke 18:1-8 (NLT)

C. Three simple things we can do to elevate our expectations of God:

1. We can repent of our unbelief and ask God to give us confidence in Him. “I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief!” Mark 9:24b (NLT)
2. We can create a list of God’s characteristics and promises for which we can praise daily Him in prayer. “I will tell of the Lord’s unfailing love. I will praise the Lord for all he has done.” Isaiah 63:7a (NLT)
3. We can ask other Christians to pray with us/for us. “The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.” James 5:16b (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

Read Mark 9:14-29 and then discuss the following questions:

1. To whom can you relate most in this story - the curious crowd, the father of the demon-possessed boy who had low expectations, the powerless disciples, or Jesus who was disappointed with everybody’s lack of faith?
2. Why do you think it’s common for Christians to trust God in one area of our lives but not another?
3. Discuss the following statements:
 - People who praise God *expect Him* to help them overcome gigantic problems. (Psalm 18:1-3, 1 Samuel 17:41-47, Romans 8:35-37)
 - People who praise God *expect Him* to be faithful and good even when we are faithless and sinful. (Daniel 9, 2 Timothy 2:13)
 - People who praise God *expect Him* to always do what is right and best even if it’s not done the way we would do it or in our timeframe. (Micah 7:7, Romans 8:28)
4. Do you think praising God is easier for some people than others? If so, why?
5. Spend some time as a group brainstorming a list of God’s characteristics and promises from the Bible. Have one person in your group read the list out loud, and have everyone else in the group respond with “Praise the Lord” or “Hallelujah” as each item is read.
6. Spend some time as a group sharing one prayer request each. Then pray over these requests declaring the characteristics of God/promises of God from question #5 as you go along.
7. How do you think praise impacts the way we pray? (1 Peter 5:7, Luke 18:1-8)

Quotations to consider:

“Beware in your prayers, above everything else, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what He can do.” Andrew Murray

“There are no sins God's people are more subject to than unbelief and impatience. They are ready either to faint through unbelief, or to fret through impatience.” Thomas Watson

Characteristics of God

God is all-powerful. (Job 42:2, Jeremiah 32:27, Luke 1:37, Revelation 19:6)

God is all-knowing. (Psalm 139:1-3,147:5, Isaiah 46:9-10)

God is everywhere. (Proverbs 15:3, 139:5-10, Isaiah 66:1)

God is eternal. (Psalm 90:1-4, 106:1, Revelation 1:8, 22:13)

God is the creator of everything. (Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:15-17)

God is unchanging. (Malachi 3:6, Hebrews 13:8, James 1:17)

God is love. (Psalm 103:11, Psalm 136, John 3:16, 1 John 4:7-10)

God is great. (Deuteronomy 10:17, Psalm 95:3, 145:3, 147:5)

God is good. (1 Chronicles 16:34, Psalm 100:5, 145:9, Nahum 1:7)

God causes everything to work for our good. (Romans 5:3-5, 8:28, James 1:2-4)

God is patient. (Exodus 34:6, Numbers 14:18, Romans 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9)

God is forgiving. (Isaiah 1:18, Psalm 103:8-14, 2Corinthians 5:17, 1 John 1:9)

God is always with us. (Joshua 1:5-9, Psalm 23:4, Matthew 28:20)

God is our provider. (Psalm 103:5, Matthew 6:25-34, Philippians 4:19, James 1:17)

God is our refuge. (Psalm 18:1-3, 46:1-3, Psalm 91, 2 Corinthians 1:8-10)

God is our guide. (Proverbs 3:5-6, 23:1-3, 32:8, 37:23-24, Isaiah 30:21)