

# A Life of Praise



## SABBATH—AUGUST 20

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON:** Philippians 4:4–7; Joshua 5:13–Joshua 6:20; Psalm 66:1, 2; Hebrews 11:30; Exodus 16:14–31; Psalm 145; Acts 16:16–34; Philippians 1:29, 30; 2 Chronicles 20:1–30.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Always be filled with joy in the Lord. I will say it again. Be filled with joy” (Philippians 4:4, ERV).



**We show our faith  
when we praise God.**

**WE CAN PRAISE** the Lord when we feel joy. We have a hard time praising God when things are bad, right? But that's when we need to praise God the most. Praise helps us keep our faith strong.

Praise can change the worst experiences in our lives. Maybe we are hurting or suffering when we praise God. But our praising God can change us and change the people around us. Praise can help us not to feel so bad when we suffer, too.

We show our faith when we praise God. Praising God when we are sad or worried may not be easy to do. But we must praise God in hard times. We must make praise a part of our lives. Praising God has the power to change us and to help us win our fight against sin and suffering.

**WHY WE SHOULD PRAISE GOD (Philippians 4:4–7)**

The famous Russian writer Fyodor Dostoevsky was in prison waiting for punishment. His punishment was death. But at the last minute, Dostoevsky's punishment was changed. He was allowed to live. He spent many years in prison after that. Later, Dostoevsky wrote about his years in prison: "Never give up hope. Everyone else around you may stop believing that they will be free. You may be the only one left with any faith. But you must not stop believing. Praise God when you are lonely."

In these lessons, we already saw how Paul suffered many painful experiences and hard times. People hurt him and threw him in prison. But Paul was not sad at all. He wrote letters to encourage the believers in Philippi!

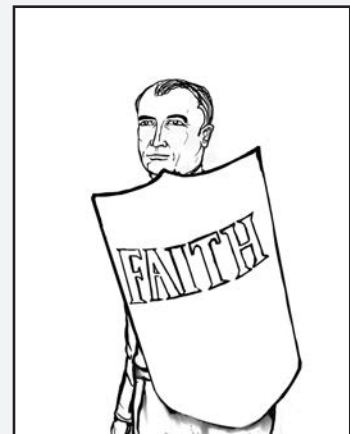
**What does Paul write about in Philippians 4:4–7? How can Paul write about these wonderful things when he is in prison? How do we get "God's peace" that Paul talks about in these verses?**

Feeling happy is hard when sad things happen. But Paul encourages us to feel joy always. That may feel a little strange to do at times. So, what does it really mean to praise God always? If we believe Paul, then we must do two things:

(1) We must praise God both in good times and in bad times. (2) We must learn to praise God at times that we do not want to praise Him at all.

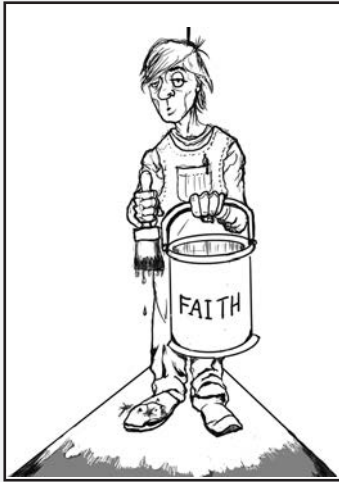
Paul asks us to praise God when we feel we don't have any good reason to praise Him. What should we do when we don't know what will happen next? Praise God more. In other words, we show our faith when we praise God. Faith is not about how we feel. We have faith because we believe in Bible truth about God. In the same way, praise also is not about how good we feel. We praise God because we accept Bible truth about God. We trust in God's promises, too. Faith and praise show that we trust in God. Trust in God helps improve our thoughts, feelings, and lives.

**What is the Bible truth about God in Philippians 4:4–7? Make your own list of Bible truths about God. Praise God for each Bible truth. How does your list change the way you feel about the difficult things in your life?**



**Faith is something we have because we believe in Bible truth about God.**

**PRAYING FOR WALLS TO FALL DOWN**  
**(Joshua 5:13–Joshua 6:20)**



**Sometimes our faith seems to “paint” us into a corner.**

There’s a saying in English: “Don’t paint yourself into a corner!” What does this saying really mean? Make a picture in your mind of a room. You paint the floor in the room. But after a while, you end up in a corner of the room. You are stuck because you don’t want to walk over the fresh paint. So, you must wait until the floor is dry!

Sometimes our faith seems to “paint” us into a corner. Troubles or hard times in life come. Then our faith “traps” us the same as the wet paint on the floor. We look at our problems and must make a choice. We can reject God, faith, and our beliefs. Or by faith we can believe in something that is not possible for anyone but God to do.

God brought the Israelites into a “corner” or a difficult test. The Israelites wandered for 40 years in the desert. After this time, God didn’t lead His people to beautiful, empty meadows. God led His people to one of the strongest cities in the land. Then God commanded the Israelites to march around Jericho for six days. During their march, God commanded the Israelites not to say anything. So, they marched in silence for six days. On the seventh day, God told the Israelites to shout. God promised that their shouting, plus the trumpets, were going to cause the city’s walls to fall.

**Read Joshua 5:13–Joshua 6:20. What does God wish to teach the Israelites?**

Shouting will not cause the walls to fall. When God commands the Israelites to shout, He asks them to do the shouting that David writes about in Psalm 66: “Everything on earth, shout with joy to God! Praise his glorious [holy and beautiful] name! Honor him with songs of praise!” (Psalm 66:1, 2, ERV). This shouting was praise! The Israelites stared at the walls for six days. They knew that they had no chance of breaking those walls on their own. God broke down the walls when the Israelites praised Him.

**How does the story about the walls of Jericho help us understand the meaning of Hebrews 11:30? When God is about to do something new for us, He may bring us to a “Jericho.” Why? He wants to teach us that we don’t win in our own strength. Everything we need comes from God. We must praise Him. This act shows our faith.**

## THE LIFE OF PRAISE (Exodus 16:14–31)

We may think that praising God is hard to do in good times. So, how much more difficult is it to praise Him when times are hard? That is just what the Bible asks us to do. Praise is something that we can get better at. At first, praise may be hard work. But the more we do it, the more praise changes us. Soon, praise becomes a way of life.

**Read Psalm 145. What reasons does David give for praising God? In what ways should the words of Psalm 145 be your own?**

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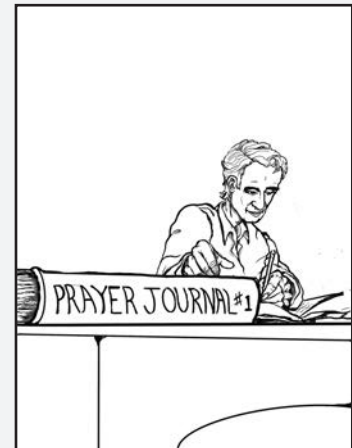
The famous British preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote a book named *The Practice of Praise*. The book is about Psalm 145:7. Spurgeon tells us three things we can do that can help us praise God better in our lives.

**1. Look around us.** If we don't look around us, we won't see God's glory and beauty in this life. Then we will have no reason to praise Him. What do you see in nature that gives you a good reason to praise God? What can you see in your spiritual life that gives you a reason to praise God? Maybe you see faith growing in the life of a young Christian?

**2. Remember what we have seen.** If we want to live a life of praise, we must remember our reasons for praising God. What are the wonderful things God did for you? What do you do to help yourself remember? Think about these things often. Then you will not forget God's love.

**3. Talk about the things God does for us.** Praise is not something we do only in our minds. We can praise God when we are alone. But praise is not only private. Praise is something we say about God to other people. What reasons can you think of to praise God? How will your praise of God change the lives of other people?

**Take a pen and some paper and spend some time writing and thinking about the three things that you can do to praise God. What can you do to make praising God a stronger habit in your life?**



**If we want to live a life of praise, we must remember our reasons for praising God.**

**A POWERFUL SONG OF PRAISE (Acts 16:16–34)**

**An earthquake opens the jails. But Paul, Silas, and the other prisoners do not try to escape.**

The book of Acts shows us that our praise can be a powerful force in the lives of other people. Read Acts 16:16–34. In this story, Paul and Silas are thrown into prison after they are beaten. No one is there to put medicine on the cuts on their backs. Paul and Silas are in terrible pain. Their feet are locked in wooden boards. Then the men are placed in a dark prison. Do Paul and Silas give up hope? No! They start to pray and sing.

Then an earthquake opens the jails. But Paul, Silas, and the other prisoners do not try to escape. The jailer is surprised that no one tried to run away. The jailer “fell down in front of Paul and Silas. Then he brought them outside and said, ‘Men, what must I do to be saved?’ ” (Acts 16:29, 30, ERV).

**Why does the surprise cause the jailer to think about his need to be saved? Do you think that the other prisoners stayed because Paul and Silas sang and prayed? How do you think that the songs and prayers of Paul and Silas helped the jailer and his family to give their hearts to the Lord?**

You may be surprised to think that your praise can change the lives of the people around you. What if Paul and Silas sat in the dark prison and complained? Do you think anyone will be saved that night?

We don’t know what happened to the jailer and his family. But try to make a picture of them in your mind reading the words that Paul wrote from another prison in Rome: “God has blessed you in ways that serve [give honor and praise to] Christ [Jesus]. He [God] allowed you to believe in Christ. But that is not all. He [God] has also given you the honor of suffering for Christ. Both of these [acts] bring glory to Christ. You saw the difficulties [problems] I had to face [fight against], and you hear that I am still having troubles. Now you must face them too” (Philippians 1:29, 30, ERV). For sure, if the jailer should read these words, his heart will be full of joy!

**Praise God more when you are around other people. You never know whose life you can change with your words and songs of praise to God.**

## PRAISE IS A POWERFUL WEAPON (2 Chronicles 20:3–12)

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1–30. In this story, King Jehoshaphat discovers that praise is a mighty weapon. The king learned that a big army is coming against him. But the king didn't go out right away to fight them. What did the king do? He "decided to ask the LORD what to do" (2 Chronicles 20:3, ERV). Then the people of Judah came to Jerusalem for a fast. A fast is a time when people stop eating food for a little while for spiritual reasons. During the fast, King Jehoshaphat prays, "We don't have the strength to stop this large army that is coming against us. We don't know what to do! We are looking to you for help" (2 Chronicles 20:12, ERV).

**When you see a "big army" coming your way, what do you do? Read Jehoshaphat's words in 2 Chronicles 20:3–12. What can you learn from Jehoshaphat about what to do when you are in trouble?**

The Holy Spirit filled Jahaziel with a special message from God. Then Jahaziel announced to King Jehoshaphat: " "You will not have to fight this battle. Just stand there and watch the LORD save you. Judah and Jerusalem, don't be afraid. Don't worry, because the LORD is with you. So go out to stand against those people tomorrow" ' " (2 Chronicles 20:17, ERV). After Jahaziel's announcement, the people worshiped God and sang praises to Him (2 Chronicles 20:18, 19). Yes, God was going to fight for them. But the people also needed to march out and meet the enemy.

This march was not an ordinary march to war. Jehoshaphat commanded a choir to sing praises to God while the army marched out of the city. "As [when] they began to sing and to praise God, the LORD set an ambush [trap] for the army from Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir who had come to attack Judah. The enemy was defeated [destroyed]!" (2 Chronicles 20:22, ERV). The Bible tells us that God helped His people right at the time that they started to " 'give thanks to the Lord. For [because] His loving-kindness lasts [continues] forever' " (2 Chronicles 20:21, NLV).

**Read 2 Chronicles 20:1–30 again. What important rules can you find in these verses? How can praise help your spiritual life during suffering and stress?**



**King Jehoshaphat discovers that praise is a mighty weapon.**

**ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:** Read Ellen G. White, “Jehoshaphat,” pages 190–203, in *Prophets and Kings*; and “The Fall of Jericho,” pages 487–498, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Let’s teach our hearts and hands to praise God for His love. No one else can match God’s love for us. Let’s teach ourselves to be filled with hope. Let’s learn to live in the light that shines from the cross of Calvary. We always must remember that we’re children of heaven’s King. We are sons and daughters of the Lord. He is the Leader of all the angels. For this reason, God gives us the gift of peace. We can trust in Him without any fear or worry.”—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, page 253, adapted.

“I love and praise the Lord. I want you to give Him glory with me. Praise the Lord when you are sad. Praise Him when you fight against sin. Paul says, ‘Always be filled with joy in the Lord. I will say it again. Be filled with joy’ [Philippians 4:4, ERV]. Will joy bring a sad spirit into your family? Of course not. Joy will bring a sunbeam. In this way, you will collect rays of everlasting light from God’s throne. You will share this light with other people around you. I encourage you to do this work. Share this light and life with other people around you. Try to make the lives of other people around you better. Lead them to God. Show them heaven and its glory. Help them to seek the riches that come from heaven. These riches will never rust, rot, fade, or fail. These riches continue forever.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 2, pages 593, 594.



“Will joy bring a sad spirit into your family? Of course not. Joy will bring a sunbeam.”

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Why must we praise God together? How does your church praise God on the Sabbath? Does praise help you feel near God? If not, what can your church do to improve its experience?
- ② What does it mean to praise God when you are sad? Or to praise Him when you fight against sin? How can praise help you in your fight?
- ③ How has praise changed your life?
- ④ As a class, pick a psalm of praise to read. What does this psalm teach you about praise? How does it make your faith stronger?

## PART 9: GROWING IN JESUS

**A**fter Mother's baptism, Father fought hard against the evil spirits that wanted to control him. At night, evil spirits filled him. They didn't let him get much sleep. Anytime the evil spirits saw Mother, they said mean and nasty things to her.

Father and Mother made their faith strong by praying and studying the Bible study guide every day. Father learned to pray on his knees. He spent much personal time with God.

Mother learned to trust God more each day. She felt that God cared for her so much. Many Bible promises gave her hope during Father's fight with the evil spirits. She felt comforted by the promise in James 4:7: "So give yourselves to God. Stand against the devil, and he will run away from you" (ERV). She also read: "But the Lord can be trusted. He will make you strong. He will keep you safe from all that is wrong" (2 Thessalonians 3:3, WE). Mother felt comforted by Jesus' words in John 10:10, too: "The thief comes only to steal the sheep and to kill them and spoil [ruin; destroy] them. I have come so that people may live and they may enjoy life to the full" (WE). Anytime Mother read a Bible verse that helped her or gave her hope, she copied it into a special notebook. Every morning when she got up at 5:00 A.M. to pray, she asked God to keep His promises.

Mother also wrote a special prayer for Father. Mother prayed this prayer every morning for a year. She prayed, "Lord, I ask You to save my husband, Eduardo. Please help him give himself to You with all his heart. Help me to love him. Make my love for him new each day. I give myself to You, Lord. Bless Eduardo. Help him to serve and honor You. Teach him Your way. Punish him when needed. Change him into a man who will wish to follow You. Help me to encourage him. Help me to respect and love him. I ask these things in the name of Jesus. Amen."

Meanwhile, Father started Bible studies. He planned to get baptized in a year. He wished to be baptized on October 29, the same day his son was baptized.

During the time that Father studied the Bible, he also started to watch YouTube sermons by Seventh-day Adventist preachers. Father watched sermons by other Christian preachers, too. Father wanted to see if these preachers believed what the Bible taught. Father was surprised when the evil spirits made fun of him for watching the other preachers.

Father stopped watching the sermons by the non-Adventist preachers after that. "Now I know that I'm in the right church!" he thought.

Your 13th Sabbath Offering will help build eight churches in South America. Four of these churches will be built in Brazil, where Father (Eduardo Ferreira dos Santos) and his family live.

INSIDE  
*Story*  
by ANDREW MCCHESENEY



**Mother prayed this prayer every morning for a year.**