

***The Refiner's Fire***  
***A Life of Praise***

Lesson #9 for December 1, 2007

Scriptures: Joshua 5:13-6:20; 2 Chronicles 20:1-30; Psalm 145; Acts 16:16-34; Philippians 4:4-7.

1. This lesson is about "praise." Do you consider praise to be an essential part of your Christian experience? Why do we need to praise God? Do we need specific things for which to give God thanks? Should we "never stop praising" God? (Philippians 4:4-7; Revelation 4) Is it possible to praise "without ceasing"? How would that be demonstrated? What form would that praise take?
2. If we are to praise continuously, does that mean in both good times and in bad times? Are there times when you do not feel like praising anyone? Does God expect us to praise Him even in those times?
3. How does praising God affect us? What is the relationship between praise and faith? Our Bible study guide suggests that "praise is faith in action." What does that imply to you?
4. Does God really expect us to praise Him even during difficult times? Or only during comfortable times?
5. Read Philippians 4:4-7. How many reasons did Paul give for praising God? Do you praise God that He is coming back soon? Do you thank Him for all of the "daily necessities" that He provides?
6. Why does our Bible study guide suggest that praise is an "act of faith"? Do the circumstances surrounding us dictate whether or not we should praise God?
7. In His dealings with human beings, in your mind, what aspects of God's character are most praiseworthy? Could you make a list of things for which you regularly give praise to God?
8. Do you know people who are "always" praising others, including God? Is it more important to praise God when we feel depressed, upset, and when times are tough, or when times are good?
9. When we praise God, is it for His benefit or ours? Do we praise God because He needs our praise or because we need to give praise?
10. Should praise be "given" primarily in the church? How should it be "given"?
11. Is it hard to remember to praise God when things are going well? Is it useful, or even necessary, for us to praise God verbally? Or do we only need to think the thoughts within our own head?
12. If "faith" is a word to describe our relationship with God, does "praise" have an effect on that relationship? How?
13. Review the story of the conquest of Jericho as recorded in Joshua 5:13-6:20. Were the children of Israel praising God while they walked around the city? As they looked at those massive walls around the city, did it tend to encourage their faith or to discourage them? What do you think caused the walls to fall down? Was it the shouts of the people? Or the blasts of the trumpets?
14. What do you think the children of Israel expected to happen after they walked around the city of Jericho seven times and then shouted? Would you have thought that shouting was a futile gesture? Does God ever ask us to do something in our day which seems "stupid"? If you had seen a river divide—leaving a path of dry ground because someone "stepped into the water in faith"—or if you had seen the walls of a mighty city fall because people shouted, would that increase your faith?
15. When we face difficult challenges in our world today, do we seek ways to solve the problems ourselves or do we turn to God and ask for His guidance?
16. Suppose that you work for a large technology firm. Suppose further that you are facing a difficult challenge that no one has yet figured out how to solve? Would you be comfortable saying to your colleagues, "Let's pray about it and give thanks to God and praise His name that he will give us a solution"?

17. Read Psalms 145. What did David mention as reasons for praise? Notice that David praised God for His greatness, His mighty acts, His kindness, His love, His mercy, His slowness to anger, His compassion and goodness to everyone, His majesty, His eternal kingdom, His faithfulness, His help for those who are in trouble, the food He provides, His righteousness, the fact that He is near to all of us when we call, and finally, that He will eventually rid this world of sin and sinners.
18. What does it mean to “practice praise”?
19. Do you see things happen every day in your personal experience that are reasons for praising God? When you see those kinds of things occur, do you rejoice and tell others about them?
20. Are you thankful that in every difficult situation you can send up a silent prayer for God’s help?
21. What would your life be like if God were not present? Have you gotten used to trusting in Him and depending on Him in every aspect of your life?
22. When you are facing very difficult problems in your home or at work, are you able to sleep better at night by turning your problems over to God? Do you praise God for the resulting good night’s sleep?
23. If you face a very difficult situation and you decide to praise God, does that change the situation in any way? If you were shackled to a stone lying at a 45° angle in a Philippian prison, do you think you could sing? What do you think Paul and Silas were thinking about and singing about?
24. What do you suppose was the attitude of the other prisoners in the prison as Paul and Silas were singing? Did they shout for them to keep quiet? Were they within earshot so they could ask questions? Had they ever heard of anything like that before?
25. Are Paul and Silas really examples for us under our circumstances?
26. What did Paul tell the jailer was required for salvation? Why do you think the jailer was asking Paul and Silas about salvation? Why did the jailer ask what he needed to “do” to be saved? Were Paul and Silas just humming Bible verses or did they have specific songs they were singing? What kind of messages did those songs contain?
27. Review the story of Jehoshaphat’s conquest as recorded in 2 Chronicles 20:1-30. What do you think of approaching war that way? Would that have worked in World War I or World War II? Should we have tried it in Vietnam or even in Iraq? Would it be presumptuous for a soldier who is a Seventh-day Adventist Christian to go to Iraq and pray for the Lord to protect him? By praying and praising God, could he then move around doing his job without fear?
28. What do you think actually happened to the armies of Edom, Moab, and Ammon? Could such a thing ever happen to a group of enemies in our day? Did all of those soldiers die of “friendly fire”?
29. Does “public praise” have a different role in our Christian experience than “private praise”? Does God want us to praise Him privately as well as publicly? Think about the way your church conducts its services? What parts of the services are truly praises to God? Is special music which is well-prepared and well-executed a kind of praise to God? What about a good Sabbath School class?
30. Does your life have adequate “praise” in it? Does your relationship with God give you enough reasons to praise? Is it possible that praise has been a missing element in your Christianity?

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