

Teach Us to Pray

Lesson 4: Adoration: Hallowing God's Name -- Psalm 145

An old man sits down to write, and he cannot help himself. "I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever." David has prayed a great many prayers in his life, prayers of desperation in caves, prayers of guilt after great failure, prayers for rescue from enemies who wanted him dead. But this prayer is different. He is not asking for anything. He is simply telling God how great he is, and he means to keep doing it, every day, as long as he draws breath. The psalm reads like a man who has been overwhelmed by the goodness of God and has decided that the only fitting response is praise.

We are not very practiced at this. If we are honest, most of our prayers are requests with a thin coat of thanks on top. We come to God the way we come to a help desk, with a problem to solve and a list to read off. The idea of spending real time simply adoring God, dwelling on his greatness and his goodness for their own sake, can feel strange, even inefficient. What is the point of telling God things he already knows about himself?

But adoration is not for God's information; it is for our transformation. When we set our minds on how great God is, our problems do not vanish, but they find their right size. The God who is good to all, who upholds all who are falling, who is near to all who call on him, is bigger than the thing that kept us awake last night. Praise lifts our eyes. It reminds us who is on the throne. It is the reason the model prayer begins not with "give me" but with "hallowed be your name."

That is where this lesson begins. Before we ask God for a single thing, we learn to adore him for who he is. Read Psalm 145 slowly, the way you would savor a letter from someone you love, and let David teach your heart to do what it was made to do, to extol the God and King who is worthy of every word of praise.

Group Discussion: If you listened to a typical week of your prayers, how much would be requests and how much would be simple praise of God for who he is? Why do you think adoration is so often the smallest part of our praying, and what do we miss when praise is crowded out by requests?

Personal Reflection: When was the last time you praised God simply for who he is, with nothing to ask for? What does the balance between asking and adoring in your prayers reveal about how you tend to see God, more as a means to what you want, or as the One you want most?

Read Psalm 145

Study Questions

1. David opens, "I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever" (v. 1), and the whole psalm is praise without a single request. What is adoration, and why does Scripture so often place the praise of God for who he is at the very foundation of prayer?
2. Be honest about the makeup of your prayers. Is praise actually present in them, or have your prayers become mostly a list of needs? What would it look like this week to begin your prayers, as David does, by simply adoring God before asking him for anything?
3. David says, "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable" (v. 3), then heaps up words for God's majesty and mighty deeds (vv. 4-6). What does it mean that God's greatness is "unsearchable," and how should the sheer greatness of God shape the way we come to him in prayer?
4. It is easy to carry around a small, manageable picture of God that we never quite examine. Where has your view of God shrunk, so that he feels barely larger than your problems? How might deliberately dwelling on his greatness begin to restore a right sense of awe?
5. At the center of the psalm David declares, "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. The Lord is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made" (vv. 8-9). Why does David praise God not only for his greatness but for his goodness and character, and how do these two together give us solid ground for both reverence and trust?
6. It is one thing to praise God's goodness when life is sweet, and another when it is hard. Think of a difficult area of your life right now. What would it look like to praise God for his steadfast love and goodness in the middle of that, not as denial, but as an act of trust in who he is?
7. David proclaims, "Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations" (v. 13), and then describes a God who upholds the falling and gives food in due season (vv. 14-16). What does this everlasting reign and faithful provision tell us about the God we are praising, and how does adoring God as the reigning, providing King strengthen our prayers?
8. David sees God's hand opening to "satisfy the desire of every living thing" (v. 16). Where are you most prone to anxiety about provision or control? How could praising God for his faithful care become a practical antidote to that worry this week?
9. Near the end David says, "The Lord is righteous in all his ways and kind in all his works. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth" (vv. 17-18). What does it mean that God is near to those who call on him "in truth," and how does this guard our adoration from becoming empty flattery or vague spirituality rather than the worship of God as he actually is?
10. Look back across Psalm 145 as a whole, with its sweep from God's greatness to his goodness, his everlasting reign, his provision, and his nearness. Name one truth about God in this psalm that most moves you to worship, and one specific way you will build adoration into your prayers, so that you become a person who, like David, blesses God's name every day.

Now or Later

Reflect on these passages: Psalm 103, bless the Lord and forget not all his benefits; Revelation 4:8–11, the unceasing worship of the One who is holy and worthy; Isaiah 6:1–5, the holiness of God that humbles and cleanses the worshiper; Philippians 4:8, setting the mind on what is true and worthy of praise; Psalm 34:1, blessing the Lord at all times, his praise continually in our mouths.