



THESE THINGS I PRAY

This five-week series will be an exploration of the power of prayer, using the book of Psalms as a guide. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called the Psalms the “Prayerbook of the Bible.” While we don’t necessarily pray for everything the Psalms pray for, we do learn from the Psalms the mode of prayer – how to come to God in prayer. Through this series we’ll explore the simple acronym for prayer – ACTS – which stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving and Supplication. Prayer changes things and every prayer has power. Our hope is through this series you’ll be better connected to the power of prayer.

ADORATION • Psalm 145 • John Goodale • October 30, 2016

Our faith journey is a daily challenge to exchange our self-focus for a God-focus. Take our time together on Sundays: we've come to worship God, yet how easily our own self-interest can take over. We start assessing whether we like the music, the sermon, or even some of the people around us. Without realizing it, our attention has shifted from the God we came to worship, to us and how we're feeling about things. It's sobering to wonder how God might be assessing our worship of Him.

This same dynamic can also play out in our prayers; that's why beginning with adoration is so important. Psalm 145 offers a helpful example of this posture. Michael Wilcock observes, "Psalm 145 is a defiant song of praise in a world ridden by self-seeking and self-sufficiency." Whereas thanksgiving offers gratitude to God for what He's done, adoration praises God for who He is. Let's allow this psalm to shape our understanding of this element of prayer.

First, adoration places the focus of prayer upon God, rather than beginning with us. Verse 3 says, "Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom." When we praise the performance of an artist or musician, our attention is on them, rather than ourselves; the same is true with our adoration of God. Beginning this way reminds us that we're praying to a very big God. It also establishes that we revolve around Him.

Second, adoration acknowledges the character and nature of the God to whom we're praying. Verses 8-9 declare, "The Lord is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, rich in love, good to all." Too often, our minds can make our problems bigger than our God. When our prayers begin with God's love and power, it's a bit easier to trust Him with any requests that follow.

Third, adoration fuels a two-way relationship with God, rather than just using prayer to ask for things. We read in verse 1, "I will exalt You, I will praise your name." In verse 5, "I will meditate on Your wonderful works." And in verse 6, "I will

proclaim Your great deeds." Asking God's help is an important part of prayer, but if that's all we do, the relationship will only flow in one direction—and that's never healthy in any relationship. Adoration begins our prayers with something we can give God: our praise, and declaration of His goodness.

Adoration can be prompted in a number of ways. Perhaps we observe or even remember God's creative and loving fingerprints in the world around us. A sunset may stir our hearts, as could a bird's joyful song in the morning. Many other prompts can also point to God's goodness.

Or perhaps we reflect on the ways God has touched our lives and what that says about Him. This may have been what our psalmist was doing. In verse 13 he writes, "The Lord is faithful to all His promises." Then in verse 14, "He upholds all who fall, and lifts up all who are bowed down." And finally in verses 18-20, "The Lord is near to all who call on Him. He hears their cry and saves them. He watches over all who love Him." If you ever get stuck offering adoration to God, Psalm 145 isn't a bad place to start.

This psalm also helps us understand other characteristics of adoration. We see that adoration is a lifelong practice. Twice in the first two verses the psalmist declares, "I praise Your name forever and ever." This brings to mind the opening question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, written centuries ago by the Church to explain what we believe. The first question asks, "What is the chief end of man" or humanity?" The answer: "To glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Adoration is to our relationship with God what food and water are to our body—it's lifelong sustenance.

We also see that adoration is an everyday activity. We read in verse 2, "Every day I will praise You." The wording here is of constancy and regularity. We offer praise to God even on days when things aren't going well; that's because our adoration isn't prompted by our circumstances, but by our God.

Finally, we read in verse 4 that adoration is passed on from one generation to another: "One generation will commend Your works to another; they will tell of Your mighty acts." This is consistent with our church's desire to be inter-generationally connected, where this can happen. If our generation isn't helping the next one understand why and how to praise God, where are they going to pick it up?

Having said all of this, let me offer two more observations about the rhythm of adoration in our lives. First, our worship and adoration together on Sunday fuels our personal adoration of God during the week. The blessing of worshiping together is that our own individual efforts to praise God are undergirded by others. We're joined by the choir and musicians, by worship leaders, and by other worshipers around us. Together, this community's praise of God is a beautiful combination of the praise each of us brings. That's why this time together is so important each week, and why we miss out when we're not here. We take this experience and our memory of it into the next 6 days, and it provides momentum for our own individual adoration.

This leads to a second observation: Our personal adoration of God during the week fuels our worship and adoration together on Sunday. You see, we limit adoration if we perceive it as something just "between me and Jesus." As adoration of God grows and becomes embedded into our prayers, it will be natural to want to share it with others. On the flip side, if adoration doesn't play much of a role during our week, it will be easy to skip worshiping with others on Sunday in favor of other activities.

Psalms demonstrate this outward flow of adoration. It begins with the psalmist's lone voice of praise--but as it continues, the circle of adoration grows. By verse 10, we read that "all You have made will praise You." And the psalm ends by declaring every creature will offer praise. We also find in verse 12 the ultimate payoff or reward of our praise: "so that all people may know of Your mighty acts and glorious splendor."

Our private offerings of adoration in prayer are tremendously important in our relationship with God; however, there's also a natural rhythm for it to ripple outward into a larger worship body during the week, and the rest of the world each day. Admittedly, this can feel threatening; we're not sure we want to be too publically exuberant in our praise of God. So let me offer an example of what this looks like in another context.

Earlier this week I decided to do some research for this sermon on adoration, by visiting a place of great adoration and praise: I attended the Denver Broncos' Monday Night Football game! People were so into praising their team, they built their day around the game, and wore the team's colors on their clothing and even on their faces. And when the game began, we all joined perfect strangers next to us in loudly cheering for our team.

Now let me ask this: if people would do this for athletes they'll probably never have any personal interaction with, can we not be a bit more passionate in our praise of the One who created and redeemed us? The One with whom we do have a personal relationship? Could we show enough enthusiasm about the God we love and follow, that others might be intrigued to learn more about what they see in us?

When my wife Deborah waters our outside plants, she'll sometimes play praise music and sing along with it. Now, I learned early in ministry to never mention a family member in a sermon without permission--so know that I'm covered when I say that Deborah's singing is usually off-key! I share this for two reasons. First, she doesn't care how it sounds, or who in the neighborhood might hear--what's important to her is simply offering her praise to her Lord. The bigger reason I mention this is that whenever I'm home and hear my wife singing like this, those are among my most treasured moments of the day. I've been given a glimpse into Deborah's heart, and love for her Lord. And that encourages me in my own praise.

In the same way, our adoration has the potential to stir praise within others. And just as I delight in hearing Deborah's praise, God delights in ours, regardless how off-key it may be. For it communicates our heart's desire for Him, and our acknowledgement of His greatness.

This next week, why not use Psalm 145 as your prayer guide, allowing it to fuel your own expressions of love and adoration for your Lord?

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STUDY GUIDE "Adoration" • Psalm 145

Start It

- Whereas thanksgiving tends to express gratitude to God for what He's done, adoration praises God for who He is. When you think of praising the Lord, what characteristics come to mind? In what ways can you see adoration impacting the rest of our prayers?

Study It

- Michael Wilcock wrote, "*Psalm 145 is a defiant song of praise in a world ridden by self-seeking and self-sufficiency.*" Take some time to ponder the challenge you face along your own faith journey between self-focus and God focus—then read Psalm 145.
- The Westminster Shorter Catechism begins with the question, "*What is the chief end of man?*" The answer: "*To glorify God and enjoy Him forever.*" Compare this to Psalm 145:1, and consider what this might look like in your own life.
- In 145:2, the psalmist declares, "Every day I will praise you." To what degree does your offering of praise and adoration of God tend to be influenced by whether or not it's a good day?
- The psalmist writes in 145:5 of meditating on God's wonderful works. What locations in or outside your home help facilitate your own meditation upon the goodness of your Lord?
- In this psalm, we find a flow from individual praise to a larger community of praise (read 145:1-2, 4, 10, and 21). To what degree does your individual adoration of God impact your adoration of Him with others in worship on Sundays? Conversely, how does your corporate worship of God on Sundays impact your personal adoration of Him the next six days of the week?
- Read 145:11-12. How might your own personal praise and adoration of God be lived outwardly in such a way that someone around you might want to learn more about Him because of what they see in you?

Pray It

"I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever." (Psalm 145:1)

Live It

Use Psalm 145 as your "adoration primer" during this next week. As you read it slowly, pause at each expression of