

Psalms: God's Worship & Prayer Guide

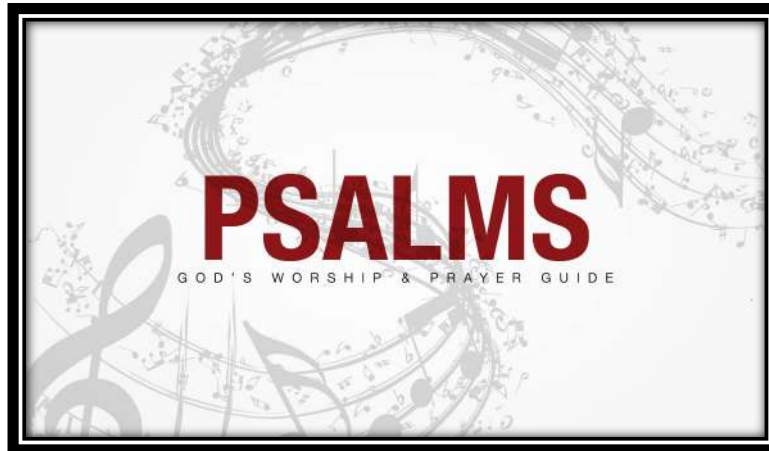
The Path Of Praise

Selected Texts

Written By

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Really, how much time to you spend in a given day giving God praise? Interestingly enough, the first time the word “praise,” *yadah* (יָדָה), appears in the Bible is when Leah bears Jacob another son and calls him Judah (Gen. 29:35). Rightfully did she immediately praise the LORD (Yahweh, the eternal One) because through this special son would come the promised Messiah, Jesus (Gen. 49:9-10; Matt. 1:2-3; Rev. 5:5). God blessed her in a magnanimous fashion, and she turned to quickly give Him, the author of life, praise due His mighty, magnificent name.

What great thing has God done in your life recently? Can you put a finger on it? I’m sure you can. Have you praised Him for His benevolent action toward you? If not, I think praise is in order. In fact, I think we all need to be reminded of the utter importance of wasting no time in giving our good God praise and thanks. It is just the thinking maturing, thoughtful, and thankful believers do.

David understood this practical principle of personal worship. From 1 Samuel we know his life had its share of triumphs and outright unexpected tragedies; however, through it all the wise king and godly man always made room in his life for praising God. In Psalm 33, which contains beautiful lyrics about praise, David shares with us why we should praise God. His sagacious, pin-pointed counsel can most definitely prime our praise pumps.

The various thought, principle movements of the passage coalesce into this one overarching homiletical motif:

We Should Praise God For Who He Is And What He Does (Psalm 33)

As David challenges all of us to use whatever is at our disposal to praise Him, be it your voice or a favorite instrument (Psalm 33:1-2), his word choice for the various names of God gives us, by way of review, our first path of praise:

- *Praise Him For His Person* (Psalm 33:1-2). Our praise should focus on what theologians would call his non-communicable and communicable attributes (omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence as well as holiness, mercy, love and so forth).
- *Praise Him For His Practice* (Psalm 33:4-5). Our praise, additionally, should let Him know that we know He is all about moral truth, righteousness, and justice . . . three great commodities, which start with God, that are sadly in short supply in our sin-tattered, selfish world. Ostensibly, we should praise Him for these practices He's committed to, and then we should commit ourselves to them as well.

To these two distinct paths of praise we add three more, which are derived from verses 6 through 22.

Praise Him For His Power (Psalm 33:6-9)

With these verses, David, by way of divine revelation, reminds us of how the cosmos started:

⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. ⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses. ⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. ⁹ For He spoke, and it was *done*; He commanded, and it stood fast.

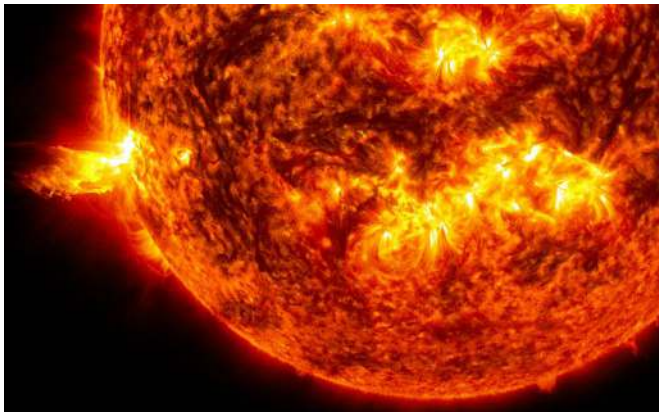
The opening prepositional phrase emphatically introduces this ontological, metaphysical reality. God, who exists outside of time and space and outside our dimensionality, made all which is seen or unseen by His sheer creative, spoken word. God, like a gifted artist, abstractly conceived of a beautiful idea and then moved to make it an objective reality. I witnessed the power of a master artist when I visited the Prado Museum in Madrid as a teenager traveling with my uncle from Barcelona. Who could not stand before the massive, colorful, three dimensional painting of *The Sacrifice of Isaac* by Andrea Del Sarto, the picture of *Abraham And The Three Angels* by Leonaert Bramer and not be stunned and silenced by their creative ability? Such intricate works of art, such design, by definition, speaks of a talented and highly creative/complex designer. To take the abstract and make it a reality is no small feat.

God, however, stands head and shoulders above all the artists who have ever lived, from Rembrandt to Picasso, for they created their masterpieces with *existing materials*. They took canvas, colorful oils, and brushes and brought their works to fruition. God, on the contrary, used *non-existent materials*. He, who is all-powerful, created the very idea of canvas, He came up with the concept of colors, and He fashioned the matter which gives us a plethora of brushes. This is, as

Francis Schaeffer, the world renowned Christian apologist, once quipped “... power beyond all that we can imagine in the human, finite realm. He was able to create and shape merely by his spoken word.”¹ The author of Hebrews echoes the thoughts of David and Francis when he writes, “³ By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible (Heb. 11). Yes, since none of us were there at the beginning, we do take it by faith that God fashioned everything by His creative word. However, the intricacy, complexity, and mathematical nature of the creation certainly helps us to logically follow this evidence to Him. Why is there something rather than nothing? Answer, because someone, God, spoke it into existence. This is the most logical inference to the best explanation concerning our origins.

To illustrate God’s powerful creative word, David on the heavens and the waters.

⁶ By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. ⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses.



“The heavens” denote the entire vast, mysterious, and ever-expanding universe as we know it. Our sun, which comprises 99 percent of the total mass of our solar system, is positioned in a system which would take a light beam ten hours to cross traveling at the speed of light (186,282 miles per second). Size-wise it is 864,000 miles in diameter, and if hollow could hold a million earths within it. Heat-wise as hydrogen fuses into helium somewhere in the neighborhood of “eight billion tons of solar

material are converted entirely into energy each second,”² resulting in every square inch of its surface giving forth the light of 300,000 candles. DeYoung, a physics and astronomy professor, takes this release of power and puts it into perspective when he states, “In just one second, the sun releases more energy than mankind has produced since the creation, including all the engines, power plants, and bombs ever constructed.”³

Jaw-dropping, isn’t it? And to think God made this star with a spoken word. What power. And our star is not even the largest either. Sirius, which is typically seen with the naked eye in the evening, is the fifth closest star to earth; however, it is a whopping 8.8 light years away from us. It is twice the size of our sun, and its surface temperature is equivalent to 23 suns. Antares, a bright orange-red star, which forms the eye of the Scorpion constellation, is a staggering

¹ Francis Schaeffer, *Genesis In Space And Time* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 28.

² Donald B. DeYoung, *Astronomy and the Bible: Questions and Answers* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 55.

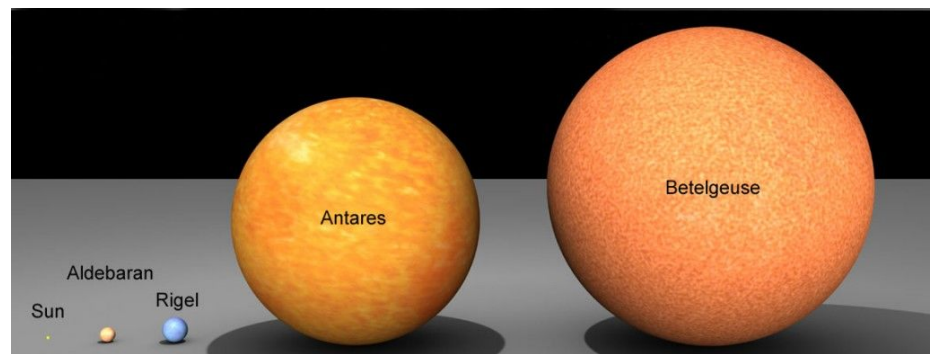
³ *Ibid.*, 55-56.



700 times the size of our massive sun, and its brightness is equivalent to 9,000 of our sun's.⁴ And these are just some of the estimated 10,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 stars glowing and glimmering over our heads on a given evening. What power God possesses to position them by His creative word; however, this is just a small slice of the intricacy and wonder of the cosmos at large.

Where God's power has placed us in the Milky Way Galaxy is no fluke either, but a well-thought out concept. Why? Dr. Hugh Ross, a world-class astrophysicist, explains:

Another distinctive of the Milky Way Galaxy is the galaxy cluster in which it resides. Nearly all other galaxies in the universe reside within dense



clusters of galaxies, with giant or supergiant galaxies as neighbors. These giants and supergiants intermittently blast their whole neighborhood with deadly radiation. Also, their gravity and the gravity of the thousands of smaller galaxies associated with them significantly distort the structures of the galaxies they contain. Thus, advanced life is not possible for galaxies dwelling in typical galaxy clusters. The Milky Way Galaxy finds itself in a tiny cluster of galaxies without any giants or supergiants nearby where the galaxies are widely dispersed. A typical galaxy cluster contains more than 10,000 closely packed galaxies. The Milky Way's cluster, called the Local Group, contains only about forty galaxies—two medium-sized (Andromeda and the Milky Way) and the rest small or dwarf.⁵



⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁵ Hugh Ross, *Why The Universe Is The Way It Is* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 2008), 69-70.

Like Rembrandt with the power of his creative brush, used lighter tones to depict the hungry lions around Daniel in the den, while employing black to cause the calm, God-fearing prophet to purposefully stand out in bold relief, God has employed His powerful word to make sure we are perfectly positioned in the harsh canvas of the universe so we can enjoy life on this beautiful blue planet.



When is the last time you thanked and praised God for the heavens, the work of His creative word? Thank you God for glorious and colorful (and vast . . . the

Tarantula Nebula is a stunning 780 light years across) nebulae, for comets, for the perfect placement of our moon so our oceans function correctly, for the fact that Jupiter's placement and size protects us from direct hits by space anomalies, for our placement in our galaxy so we can actually see your creative wonder, for Betelgeuse which is 1,200 times the diameter of our sun and which burns 120,000 brighter, for the Great Red Spot on Jupiter which is 16,000 miles long, and so on and so forth. What is man that you are mindful of him, as the Scriptures say. Who are we in comparison to what you have made by the word of your mouth? We are a wonder of your creation, really the crown of that which you have fashioned verbally. How humbling it is to look up and consider God's power. David did on my nights



while he shepherded sheep.

We need to drill down a little further into what David says here about God's creative power. When he says that God created "all of the hosts," the Hebrew for hosts, *sava* (צְבָא), has two main lexical



meanings. One, it can denote the stars, moon, and sun we see above our heads (Deut. 4:19; 2 Kings 17:16). Two, it can denote angelic beings who form an army. The prophet Micaiah tells us this much when he states,

¹⁹ Then *Micaiah* said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His

throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left (1 Ki. 22).

These hosts constitute God's army. In Isaiah 24, which comprises a chronological Little Apocalypse of the book of Revelation, the prophet prophesies how at the end of time, God will deal definitively with the demonic army which defected to serve with Satan and oppose God and the advancement of His kingdom plans.

²¹ It shall come to pass in that day *that* the LORD will punish on high the host of exalted ones, and on the earth the kings of the earth (Isa. 24).

He punishes the demons who defected and historically worked against Him, and He will punish the politicians they empowered to also do everything in their power to oppose God, spiritual truth, morality, and His life-giving laws. Verses 5 through 13 make it very clear the rebellious, riotous, rude ways of mankind, coupled with that of the demonic army, have so polluted and corrupted the earth that in the future God, who is holy, will move to judge the whole lot of them at the end of the Tribulation, and after their final attempt to undermine His rule at the end of the Millennium (Rev. 20). But I digress.

Let us not get too far afield from what David is saying here in Psalm 33, verse 6. God's creative word formed unseen and seen worlds, unseen and seen beings. The ones who are unseen have great power given to them by God.

- In Psalm 103:20, days says, "Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength." They obviously have more brute power than we do. Peter also says they have great power (2 Pet. 2:10-11).
- They will use their power to gather the elect when Christ returns at the Second Coming (Matt. 24:30-31).
- One mighty angel took the massive stone rolled over Christ's tomb and hurled it to the side like a toy (Matt. 28:2; Mark 16:3-4).
- One angel merely passed through the military encampment of the Assyrians and killed 185,000 of these seasoned warriors (2 Kings 19:35).
- The angels who rescued Lot and his family from the sexually charged mob in Sodom and Gomorrah blinded the mob with immediate blindness (Gen. 19).

Mighty beings like this are merely a product of God's creative word. When's the last time you praised God for the angels who work in your behalf as is mentioned in Hebrews 1, verse 14, "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?"

Years ago, my youth pastor and his wife had a car accident in the middle of nowhere in Washington State. As his wife lie dying on the side of the country road, a man walked up with a black bag and told them he was a doctor. He performed a tracheotomy on her and saved her life. Before he left they got his name and hospital he was supposedly associated with. Later when they traveled to that town to visit that hospital they learned that no doctor by that name had ever worked there. To this day, my youth pastor and his wife belief God sent one of those powerful angels to deliver his life from certain death. No doubt, they gave God the praise for these powerful beings God spoke into existence. Do you praise God in this fashion?

God's power, according to David is praiseworthy because it is seen in the heavens above and in the unseen realms He has constructed by His amazing spoken word. It is also depicted in the water He has blessed this planet with:

⁷ He gathers the waters of the sea together as a heap; He lays up the deep in storehouses.

Not only did He create water, He made sure it congregated on this particular planet. Like an artist uses a certain color to accomplish something wonderful and jaw-dropping in a magnificent painting, God wisely blessed us with water. Ninety-seven percent of Earth's water is found in the oceans (the Atlantic, the Pacific, the Indian, the Arctic, and the Southern Antarctic). Waters cover seventy-two percent of the earth's surface and average a depth of 12,100 feet; however, this salty water is not suitable for drinking. Six countries (Brazil, Russian, Canada, Indonesia, China, and Columbia) possess fifty percent of the world's freshwater supplies, and this is interesting in light of the fact that less than one percent of the earth's freshwater is accessible for drinking. Funny how God, in His powerful providence, made sure we had access to enough freshwater to keep us alive and enjoy the work of His creative speech.

Now, what David speaks about here expressly is how on the third creative day God spoke and the land was divided from the sea containing some 332,519,000 cubic miles of water:

⁹ Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry *land* appear"; and it was so. ¹⁰ And God called the dry *land* Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that *it was good* (Gen. 1).

John MacArthur does a fine job describing this creative word event:

The cataclysm that brought this about at the command of God is almost inconceivable. All of a sudden rock and earth, still in its unformed condition and buried under the depths of a global sea, started to move to the surface of the water. As the land pushed up from the depths, the water was displaced, gathering itself into one place—a massive ocean containing numerous “seas” but now distinct from the landmass. Perhaps chemical reactions occurred along with the massive tectonic movements, so that minerals, rock, and fertile soil were instantly formed out of the primordial ocean. But notice that what emerged was neither mud nor slime, but “dry land” (vv. 9-10), instantly read to sustain plant life. It was a staggering act of creation.⁶

No kidding. With a word from God, all of this water and land mass quickly moved in the directions commanded by God. Is there any greater display of raw, divine power? I think not. It staggers the finite mind to consider how omnipotent God really is.

How should we respond to all of this? David wastes no time telling us:

⁶ John MacArthur, *The Battle for the Beginning* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 65-66.

⁸ Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. ⁹ For He spoke, and it was *done*; He commanded, and it stood fast.

We should respond with reverential fear and awe for the display of God's power both in the past and in the present.

Years ago, Carl Sagan made this statement about the cosmos:

We live on a hunk of rock and metal that circles a humdrum star that is one of 400 billion other stars that make up the Milky Way Galaxy, which is one of billions of other galaxies, which make up a universe, which may be one of a very large number—perhaps an infinite number—of other universes. That is a perspective on human life and our culture that is well worth ponder.⁷

But, then, at the end of his life he remarked “Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.”⁸

Ah, he came close to seeing God in the first statement, and then in the other he failed to see God and God's power written clearly all over everything he studied his entire nihilistic life. Sad. Is this your response? It doesn't have to be, nor it is the most logical based on the immense amount of evidence God has given you for His creative power. Countless men and women have looked at the things David has spoken about and have turned to worship and praise the God who fashioned it all by His creative word. Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), a German astronomer and mathematician, who discovered three major laws of planetary motion, once quipped, “The chief aim of all investigations of the external world should be to discover the rational order which has been imposed on it by God, and which he revealed to us in the language of mathematics.”⁹

Kepler's words still ring true, but based on what David tells us, what we discover about the cosmos should lead us to one place. It's called praise based on fear and awe before the One who spoke it is was (Psalm 33:9). So,

- Next time you are in your lab working on something under a microscope of intricate design, stop and praise God.
- Next time you're in your boat at night on the Potomac and you see the star-studded sky glistening above you, stop and praise God.
- Next time you, as a doctor, encounter the complexity of the human system, coupled with its ability to heal itself, stop and praise God.
- Next time you are flying your military jet through massive cumulus clouds, stop and praise God.
- Next time you are enthralled a spider-web lightening cutting accords the blackened sky, stop and praise God.

⁷ Carl Sagan, *ABC News Nightline*, 4 December 1996.

⁸ *Ibid.*, *Pale Blue Dot* (New York: Random House, 1994), 9.

⁹ John Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2007), 21.

- Next time you are drinking a glass of fresh water, stop and praise God.
- Yes, next time you are hiking and you reach a peak where you can look down and see beauty and plant variety, stop and praise God the who spoke it into existence.

And what should you say? I thank you Father for displaying such power that I can't help but see you so I can know you.

