

Goodwood
NEXT CHAPTER
Living the next chapter in the story of God's church.

VERSE ONE

JANUARY

01 INTRODUCTION

PRAISE

Isaiah paints a striking image of the throne room of God. Imagine standing next to him when he entered into the temple of the Lord. What would you experience? The ground would shake beneath your feet. Smoke would blur your vision. Stunning six-winged figures would leave you breathless. Their angelic voices would make your eardrums tremble. It would be frightening. It would be petrifying. Yet all of it would pale in comparison to what you would see next. For when your eyes came to rest on the mountain-sized piece of cloth filling the room, you would slowly and reverently look upward at a figure cloaked in a robe whose train filled the entire temple. And in one shocking moment, you would realize that you were standing, trembling in the very presence of God himself.

What would be your response to such an experience? Would you burst out in song? would you even be able to utter a sound? Would you simply stare in amazement?...faint?...cry?

It's difficult to envision, for sure. Isaiah experienced the presence of God firsthand, and we have much to learn from his reaction. He cried:

"Woe to me, I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty" (Isaiah 6:5).

Notice what being in the presence of God caused Isaiah to do. He reordered his reality by intentionally enthroning God and dethroning himself, placing God in the highest place, as King, and himself at the lowest place, as a ruined man. **This is the very heart of praise.**

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John the Baptist put it even more simply,

"He must increase, I must decrease" (John 3:30).

When we practice the spiritual discipline of praise today, we do what Isaiah did. We enthrone God and dethrone ourselves. Praise can happen in a church worship service, but it can, and should, also happen every day, everywhere. In fact, when we draw near to the God that Isaiah encountered, our praise cannot be contained. It overflows as it did with David:

"I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High" (Psalm 9:1-2).

This month you will focus on growing your discipline of praise. As we start our journey, let us recognize daily the greatness of our God and His love for us.

02 DEFINITION

Praise is the practice of reordering my view of God and myself.

I enthrone God to the highest place, where indeed He dwells.

I dethrone myself to the lowest place, where indeed I dwell.

When I practice the spiritual discipline of praise, God naturally produces the following fruit in my life:

A heart of gratitude

A disposition of humility

A generous spirit

A heightened sense of compassion

Watch for these along your journey this month.

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03 SCRIPTURE

January's memory verse:

"He must become greater; I must become less." John 3:30

Other Scriptures for study:

Psalm 9:1-2

Hebrews 13:15

2 Peter 2:9

John 4:24

Psalm 68:4

Isaiah 6:5

Revelation 4:11

Hebrews 12:28-29

INTERESTED IN GOING DEEPER?

Here are some books on spiritual discipline to further your study.

Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*

John Ortberg's *The Life You've Always Wanted*

Adele Calhoun's *Spiritual Discipline Handbook*

04 PRACTICE

Here are some training exercises to practice individually or with others this month. Pick one or two from each list and try them.

Personal Practice

Enthroned God by focusing on what you appreciate about him. For five days each week, write down in the "My Story" section of your book one to three words that identify:

Week One: what you appreciate about His creation

Week Two: what you appreciate about what He has done in your life

Week Three: what you appreciate about His character

Once a week, share your thoughts from the practice above with your non-Christian friends through either direct conversations or social media such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Make sure to use the hashtag #GWCCActs29.

Make John the Baptist's simple phrase in John 3, "He must increase, I must decrease," your unceasing prayer throughout the day. Pray it when you wake up and when you lie down as well as when you walk, eat, and drive.

Show your praise to God through some type of art. This could be through any creative form – poetry, painting, music, etc. Consider sharing your expression with friends and family.

Get to church early and silently pray for people as they walk in, thanking God for each unique creation, asking that He open each person's heart to His presence.

Interpersonal Practice

Spend some time with Jay Plunkett and find out areas in which you can aid our shut ins. There are many areas you can serve there.

Make plans to help out with our Martin Luther King Jr. Day project with the Gardere School.

05 PRAYER

You can enthrone God throughout the day by noticing His glory in all things and praising Him in constant prayer.

What are you praising Him for this month?

You can intentionally dethrone yourself in regard to your selfish urges by making note of where you fall short and asking God to work on you in those areas. What are you asking God to help you with this month? What are you scared to ask Him about because you might not like the answer?

Other things you are praying for this month:

God's answers to your prayers:

06 MY STORY

Isn't it amazing to know that you are part of God's ongoing narrative? Use this section to record your thoughts and experiences on the discipline of praise so you can pick up this book in the years to come and reflect on how God is faithful in your life.

Be creative! Use these pages to write a journal entry. Attach a picture. Paste in a text message, Tweet, or e-mail. Anything that will help you document your personal journey of praise this month. Try to use any content that you have already made by adding to this book. You can get additional blank pages from the office

Here are some questions to get you started:

What specific things will you want to remember about praise for years to come?

Where did you find the fruit of gratitude, humility, generosity, or compassion in your practice of praise this month?

