

# The Liberating Power of Praise

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, well, here we are. At last, beginning a new chapter of life and ministry in Jesus Christ. On July 11th, when I preached my candidating sermon, I began with the line, I wish I could tell you what I was feeling right now. But I went on to say that it wasn't appropriate to tell you what I was feeling because you had to vote after I preached to tell me whether it was right for me to feel that. Now that you have voted, now that I've accepted your call, now that the Presbytery has validated the call, I'm free to tell you what I was feeling that day and have been feeling since and feel right now. In a word, it is joy. A fresh, invigorating joy, a joy that thrills and a joy that humbles. I am so very glad that Jesus Christ, in his love for me, would choose to call me to come and live with you and for you in this city. I'm just full of joy.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. And I see that some of you are too, so that's good. Before I preach my first official sermon, I want to take time to thank each of you who have helped us move into our home. We have felt very welcomed into the community. I gained a little weight as a result of the hospitality of all the food that has been brought in our way, but I think I can live with that for a while. I also want to take a moment to thank the pastor nominating committee who have been so very good to us. And then I want to express my gratitude to the staff for the gracious way in which you have welcomed me onto the team. I am a very fortunate man to be called to serve and lead this committed and gifted group of disciples. And I think it'd be appropriate if one more time you expressed your gratitude to this staff and what they've done during this whole period of transition.

there that.

Thank you.

[ 2 : 47 ] To that portion of Scripture entitled, The Acts of the Apostles, to chapter 16, verses 16 to 34. In this text, Luke, the author of Acts, describes a number of dramatic events, a number of what I'm going to call miracles of freedom.

These events happened in the first century city of Philippi, which was the first European city to receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. And these miracles of freedom gave birth to that dynamic church in that first century city.

Hear now the word of God, Acts 16, 16. And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave girl, having a spirit of divination, met us, who was bringing her master's much profit by fortune-telling.

Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, These men are bondservants of the Most High God who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation. And she continued doing this for many days.

But Paul was greatly annoyed and turned and said to the spirit, I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And it came out that very moment. But when her master saw that their hope for profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the authorities.

[ 4 : 11 ] And when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, and are proclaiming customs, which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans.

And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them and threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely, and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

But about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. And suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken, and immediately all the doors were open, and everyone's chains were unfastened.

And when the jailer had been roused from sleep and seen that the prison doors were open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried out in a loud voice, saying, Do yourself no harm, for we are all here.

And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. And after he brought them out, he said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.

[ 5 : 27 ] And they spoke the word of the Lord to them together with all who were in the house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized in all his household. And he brought them into the house, and he set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

Spirit of the living God, you inspired the writing of these words, and we pray now that you would cause these words to come off the page and into our lives as never before.

For we pray this in the name of the living word, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. In this story, Paul has described for us four miracles of freedom.

First, there is the miracle which happened to the young servant girl. For years, she had been held captive by a spirit of divination. And for years, she had been used by greedy men who were exploiting her enslavement.

But in the name of Jesus Christ, she was set free from both forms of bondage, from demonic possession and from economic exploitation. The second miracle happened to the Philippian jailer.

[ 6 : 40 ] In Jesus Christ, he found a whole new way of life. He found what everyone finds when they have faith in him, freedom from guilt and shame and entrance into grace and peace with God.

The third miracle happened inside the city jail. Late that night, an earthquake shook its foundations. And the amazing earthquake is that it accomplished a very specific purpose.

It released the apostle Paul and his companion Silas from their chains and it opened the cell doors without destroying the building. It's as though this earthquake knew where to shake and where not to shake.

The fourth miracle happened within the spirit of Paul and Silas. While they were still chained inside their locked prison doors.

And it is that miracle I want to focus on today. It is not as dramatic as the other three, but it is so much more profound. Let me briefly reconstruct the situation in which this miracle takes place.

[ 7 : 45 ] Paul and Silas are sitting on the damp, cold prison floor. It was late at night. It had been a long day. They had been manhandled by an angry mob. They had been unjustly treated by the civil authorities.

The police had stripped them in public and beaten their backs 39 times with rods. Their flesh was ripping off their back. The police had literally thrown them down into the prison cell. The jailer had gone to the extreme of binding their feet in stocks.

They could not find any relief even as they leaned against the wall because of the way their back was hurting from all of that. Now, we would not have been surprised if Paul and Silas had felt very sorry for themselves.

We would not have blamed them at all if they had given in to self-pity. They were hurting. They needed medical attention. Nor would we be surprised if they had ranted and raved about their circumstances.

We would not have blamed them for being very angry. The charges leveled against them were not true. Their civil rights had been violated. No Roman citizen was to be thrown in jail without a trial.

[ 8 : 53 ] Furthermore, we would not have been surprised if they had been angry with God. We would not have blamed them for shaking their fist at God and asking, Why? Why are you letting this happen to us?

After all, why are they in these crummy circumstances? Who is to blame for their crummy circumstances? It's the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit had used them to free this slave girl from divination.

This is not fair, they might have cried. If this is what it means to be used by you in power, then I don't want anything to do with it. We would not have blamed them at all for being angry with God. And we might have even counseled them to express that anger to God, assuring them that God can handle that kind of anger. Johnny Erickson Tata, the woman who is paralyzed from the neck down, reminds people who suffer that it is better to be angry with God than to walk away from God. Furthermore, we would not have blamed them if they had become bitter. We would not have been surprised at all if they had become bitter. Adversity easily hardens the human spirit.

[10:01] Adversity easily creates this bitterness that can permeate the whole being. Self-pity, ranting and raving, shaking their fist at God, bitterness. All of those reactions we understand and even to a degree we expect.

Now here's the miracle. Not all that dramatic, but so very profound. Luke tells us in verse 25 that in those painful, unjust, seemingly hopeless circumstances, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God.

That they were praying doesn't surprise us. I mean, even unbelievers will try prayer in a crisis. You know the saying, there are no atheists in a foxhole. What surprises us is that they're singing. They're singing hymns. They're singing hymns of praise to God. It's not that they were ignoring their crummy circumstances.

It's not that they were pretending that they were not in trouble. They weren't doing any of the denial games. It's just that they chose to respond to this adversity by worshiping God.

[11:12] And here's the point I want to stress today. In so doing, they were free. Before the earthquake shook and released them from their chains and from their jail.

They were free. And the other prisoners could see it. It was contagious. Years later, Paul wrote a letter to the people at Philippi. And in that letter, he says three times, Rejoice in the Lord always. Rejoice in the Lord always. Rejoice in the Lord always. And that exhortation carried great clout with the Philippians. For for one thing, he was writing from another prison cell. And for another, they had seen him rejoice in the Lord in their city jail.

Every one of us experiences some sort of prison. Not all prisons are made up of blocks of concrete and steel bars. In fact, some of the most suffocating and debilitating prisons have nothing to do with concrete and steel bars.

Some of the worst prisons have to do with the blocks of disappointment and depression. With bars of strained relationships and guilt and fear about where we're going to get money and worrying about our jobs.

[12:28] Paul and Silas found inner freedom in the prison cell. And they found it by praying and by singing hymns of praise to God.

The question is why? Why does worship have that liberating effect on the human spirit? Why does singing praise to God bring release even in the midst of the prison cell?

I'm not sure I can give a full answer to that. And I have a hunch that many of you could give an answer to that and will teach me along the way. Something happens when we lift our hearts in praise that finally cannot be articulated in words.

But as I see it, singing hymns of praise to God liberates in the prison cell for three major reasons. First of all, worship frees the natural restorative functions of the human body.

Let me say that again. Worship frees the natural restorative functions of the human body. How? Singing praise to God fills our minds with powerful positive thoughts.

[13:41] And as medical science now tells us, positive thoughts directly affect our physical and emotional states of being. Positive thoughts trigger the release of special chemicals which flow through our body, enabling us to cope with the circumstances.

You know the name Norman Cousins. Norman Cousins tells us about his experience of this fact in his book, *The Anatomy of an Illness*. He spent months as a patient in the UCLA Medical Center. Now, if you've ever been to the UCLA Medical Center, you know that's not a place you want to spend months. I've been there many times, not as a patient, but to visit people, and it's a huge, huge impersonal place.

Cousins says that the actual medical attention given to him didn't do anything for the disease. What finally helped him come to conquer this disease were all of these old Charlie Chaplin films that his friends were bringing him that would make him laugh.

The laughter filled his minds with bright and positive thoughts, enabling these chemicals to move through his body so that his body could embrace the medicine they were giving him at UCLA. But nothing fills the mind with positive, powerful thoughts like singing praise to the living God.  
[ 14 : 56 ] We witness this phenomena every Christmas season. Why do people experience new joy and new peace at Christmas? It's because of all of the hustle and bustle.

It's because of going to the galleria. It's because of all the parties, right? Not. Hardly at all. It's because people are singing at Christmastime.  
And because people sing every day. Christmas carols fill our minds with positive thoughts that lift our spirits. It happens every Christmas season.

I see it happening in convalescent hospitals. People who otherwise are almost absentee human beings, when they hear and sing a Christmas carol, come alive as though they were never sick. It happens even to people who don't believe what they're singing in the Christmas carols. It's hard to remain in a negative frame of mind while you're singing, Joy to the world, the Lord has come, or angels we have heard on high.

[ 15 : 57 ] So too at other times than Christmas. It's hard to relish self-pity while you sing, Joyful, joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love.

It's hard to remain in hopelessness while you're singing Martin Luther's A Mighty Fortress is Our God, A Bulwark Never Failing, Our Helper He Amid the Strife of Mortal Ill Prevailing.  
Singing praise to God has this liberating effect on the human spirit because it fills our minds and emotions with positive thoughts which then release the natural restorative functions of the body. There's a second reason for the liberating power of praise. Worship frees us to see all of the facts of our situation.

I'll say that again. Worship frees us to see all of the facts of our situation. What do I mean? I mean that the facts which we can see with our eyes are not the only facts, and they're not all the facts.

[ 17 : 02 ] Look around this room. Look. Listen. Smell. Touch. Take in all the data you can with your five senses, and then realize that there's so much more to this moment than what you can take in with those senses.

Those of you who are sight-impaired are ahead of us at this point. But you already know there's more to reality than meets the eye. Worship opens the eyes of our heart to that more reality. It's not by accident that it was while he was on the rock piles, on the island of Patmos, worshipping God, that the apostle John received the visions which are now recorded in the book we call The Revelation.

Well, to what other facts does worship open us? Well, while worshipping, our eyes are open to the fact of the faithfulness of God.

If Paul and Silas had only looked at their circumstances through their unaided eyes, they would have concluded that they were deserted, that they had been abandoned. But while they sang hymns of praise, the other facts came into mind.

[ 18 : 14 ] They knew that they were not forgotten at all, that the God who comes to us as Jesus Christ is utterly faithful. The hymns which Paul and Silas sang were likely psalms, which is why I'd like to see us incorporate psalms more into the worship service.

Many of these contemporary choruses are just psalms that have been put to music. Paul and Silas were singing psalms. Did they sing a psalm like Psalm 27? Yahweh is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? Yahweh is the refuge of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid? One of the most beloved hymns of the last century is the hymn, Loved with Everlasting Love, written by George Robinson.

And the last verse has often lifted many a believer. His forever, only his. Who the Lord and me shall part? Ah, with what a rest of bliss Christ can fill the loving heart.

Heaven and earth may fade and flee. Firstborn light in gloom decline. But while God and I shall be, I am his, and he is mine.

[ 19 : 24 ] The children of the Heavenly Father are never deserted. And worship opens our eyes to remember that. Worship opens our eyes to yet another fact that we cannot learn by our physical senses.

And it is that the faithful God is no stranger to the prison cell. Did Paul and Silas sing Psalm 23? Yahweh is my shepherd.

I shall not want. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil. For thou art with me. In the valley, thou art with me.

One of my favorite modern hymn writers is Margaret Clarkson, a woman who has never known a day without severe headaches. Again and again, the words from her hymn, Lord of the Universe, have lifted me.

Lord of the Universe, hope of the world. Lord of the infinite reaches of space. Here on this planet, you put on our flesh, vastness confined to the womb of a maid.

[ 20 : 27 ] Lord of the Universe, hope of the world. Lord of the infinite eons of time. You came among us, lived our brief years, tasted our griefs, our aloneness, our fears.

I'm reminded then that no prison cell is ever foreign territory to the incarnate God. Did Paul and Silas sing parts of Psalm 139.

Oh, Yahweh, where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in shale, you are there. If I take the wings of the dawn and go to the remotest part of the sea, even there, your right hand lays hold of me.

The angel told Joseph that he had to give the infant Jesus the name Emmanuel. It means God with us. Even the prison cell is the sanctuary of the Holy One.

Worship frees our vision to embrace even more of reality. We learn that Emmanuel gives us the grace to cope with the circumstance. There's an old hymn, one of my favorites, written in 1651, If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee.

[ 21 : 37 ] And it has freed so many people in difficult times. If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee and hope in Him in all thy ways, He'll give thee strength whate'er betide thee and bear thee through the evil days.

God never yet forsook at need the soul that trusted Him indeed. God with us in the cell sustains us with the grace we need to keep going.

As we keep worshiping, our eyes are opened still more widely. We discover again that our God is bigger than the circumstances which discourage and enslave.

You know the old Swedish hymn, especially if you've been to Forest Home. I think it's sung at every Forest Home conference, How Great Thou Art. I learned it in Swedish at my grandmother's knees years ago.

I can't sing it in Swedish anymore. O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder consider all the worlds thy hands have made. I see the stars. I hear the rolling thunder.

[ 22 : 39 ] Thy power throughout the universe displayed. Then sings my soul, my Savior God to thee, How great thou art. How great thou art. J.B. Phillips put his finger on the root of many of our problems in the title of his classic book, Your God is Too Small.

Worship takes God out of the smallness. Worship brings us back to meet a big God. You know, I'm glad that the hymns of the church were not written by process theologians.

Process theology is one of those theological movements which has gained momentum in mainline churches over the past decade. And the basic tenet of process theology is that all of reality, including God, is in the process of becoming.

Becoming is the operative word. Process theology affirms that God is intimately involved in the process, but he's part of the process. He too is becoming. And as a result, God has no final word over where it's all going.

God is constantly wooing and luring creation and humanity towards some great goal, but God has no absolute power over the end. I appreciate where the process theologians are coming from.

[ 23 : 51 ] They're trying to make sense of the problem of evil, of why a good God would allow bad things to happen to people. But the solution proposed by process theology is hardly satisfactory.

The God of process theology offers no final hope. The process God can only say to us, I'm doing my best. The psalmist knew and celebrated a God who could do more than his best.

They sang the praise of one who is bigger than evil, who has the last word over evil. I'd like to think that Paul and Silas were singing Psalm 46 that night. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore, we will not fear, even though the earth should change, even though the mountains should slip into the sea, be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted in the earth. I will be exalted in the earth.

There's another chorus. Our God is an awesome God. Our God is an awesome God. He reigns from heaven above with wisdom, power, and love.

[ 24 : 53 ] Our God is an awesome God. I think you need to sing. Our God is an awesome God. He reigns from heaven above with wisdom, power, and love.

Our God is an awesome God. That ought to be sung just as you go into the office in the morning. No doubt Paul and Silas also sang hymns about and to the resurrected Jesus.

For it is in the resurrection that we discover that the living one has the final word over all of evil. Emmanuel entered into the prison cell. The doors were slammed shut.

And three days later, he comes out and he says, look, I'm alive and I have the keys. As we worship the risen Lord, we're reminded again that he has the final word over anything that threatens to undo us.

I witness the liberating power of the singing the resurrection every Easter morning when people gather and sing, Christ the Lord is risen today. Alleluia. Why not sing that every day?

[ 25 : 54 ] As we keep worshiping, our vision is cleared still more. And once again, we see all of our life in the larger perspective. We're reminded on the Lord's day that all of creation is going to be redeemed.

That one day we are going to be gathered at the throne before the Lamb. The third verse of All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name helps me regain that perspective.

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng we at his feet may fall will join the everlasting song and crown him Lord of all. When I sing that, I'm reminded that all of history is going to end at the feet of Jesus Christ.

I'm reminded. I'm told where the movie's going. And I'm given a picture of the preview. And when I know the movie is going to end at the feet of Jesus, I can endure the scary parts.

Who is not moved by? Whose vision is not stretched by? The singing of the hallelujah chorus. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

[ 26 : 53 ] The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ. And he will reign forever. Singing praise to God liberates.

First, because worship frees the natural restorative functions of the body. And second, because worship frees our vision and helps us see all the facts.

There is a third reason for the liberating power of praise. And I'm going to express it in a daring way. Some people might say I'm going to express it in a dangerous way. Here it is.

Worship frees God. Worship frees God to work in fresh ways. Now, I do not mean to imply that somehow God can be bound.

The living God is too big and too strong. God can do anything He wants. But Scripture seems to suggest that there is a unique space in which God is more free to work.

[ 27 : 51 ] Jesus could do no miracle in His hometown because the people had put Him in a box and insisted that He stay in the box. Worship opens the box. Worship frees God to be God.

In Psalm 22, verse 3, we read, O thou who art enthroned upon the praises of Israel, or another version has it, thou who inhabits the praises of His people.

God is everywhere, but there is a sense in which God is more at home in the context of worship. I've only worshiped in this building twice now, July 11th and September 12th, and both times.

I could hardly contain the joy of the sense of the presence of God because of worship. God loves to come where people worship. Luke is careful to tell us that the earthquake which released Paul and Silas from prison happened while they were worshipping.

While they were worshipping. Is that a coincidence? Remember the story of Joshua in the Battle of Jericho? What was the context in which the walls broke down? The walls came down when the people of God were shouting praise to God.

[ 29 : 07 ] It was in the context of worship that the walls came down. Is that a coincidence? Or I think of the story of King Jehoshaphat, which you can read about in 2 Chronicles 20. Israel was being threatened on all sides by enemy nations.

And Jehoshaphat called on Israel to have a day of prayer and fasting. And in that context, he was told not to be afraid, that the battle was not his, it was the Lord's. And then Jehoshaphat was told to march toward the enemy.

And so he leads all of Israel onto the battlefield, only they're led not with soldiers who have spears. They're led with a choir who sings, praise you the Lord, the mercies of the Lord endure forever and

ever.

And in that context, God won the battle. In fact, the battle was never fought because if you know that story, in that context, God confused all those enemy nations and they ended up fighting against each other.

Is that a coincidence? Not at all. We had the privilege of living through the People Power Revolution in 1986 in the Philippines while we were serving there. And I don't know if you saw the right kind of media coverage of that event, but everywhere there were people meeting around the Lord's Supper and singing hymns.

[ 30 : 16 ] I had to go back to my office and Xerox all kinds of extra sheets of hymns for the people who were worshiping. It was in a worship context that the Filipino people were set free.

Worship frees God to be God. Worship frees God to be present in all of His beauty and holiness and power and love and mercy. and in that context God is able to work the mighty deeds.

He delights to work for the covenant people. I believe that the renewal of the church's worship will affect the renewal of the church's ministries.

I'll put it the other way. The renewal of the church's ministries in the world is going to flow out of the renewal of worship. Archbishop William Temple once said, the world is going to be saved by worship.

Now I think it's important to note that Paul and Silas chose to respond to their crummy circumstances by singing praise to God because praise had become the habit of their lives.

[ 31 : 24 ] A habit. A daily habit. They were able to stave off the self-pity, the ranting and raving and the bitterness because their hearts had been trained to respond to life with praise.

May I suggest in closing five simple disciplines that can help train our lives to be a more worshiping people? That's a rhetorical question that you can't answer.

I'm going to do it anyway. Five little disciplines. The first is to play worship music on your cassette and CD players.

Simple as that. Ours is a very noisy world. We're bombarded by noises all the time and I think we need to become more deliberate about what sounds we're going to allow to fill our home and car. Choose sounds which turn your mind and emotions to the only one who gives us life. Second, memorize hymns. Memorize them.

[ 32 : 23 ] Select a classic hymn of the church or one of these beautiful new praise choruses and work at it for a week or so. Read it every day. Read it out loud every day and sing it every day.

You have to sing it. Even if you think you can't sing, you have to sing it. That's because singing penetrates more deeply into our mind and emotions than mere speech.

That's why commercials are sung. Commercials are sung to get around all those defenses and to get under the skin. Fill your mind and your emotions with songs that speak of the goodness and promises of God.

Memorize hymns. Third, memorize scripture. Select a small portion of scripture and work at it for a week or so or however long it takes until that text of scripture is yours.

When I was in Beijing in the fall of 1988, I had lunch with a Chinese pastor who had been in a communist prison camp for 23 years. 23 years. And I asked him, how did you make it?

[ 33 : 27 ] He had already told me that he had no Christian fellowship during those 23 years. Can you imagine that? No Christian fellowship and the guards guaranteed that he wouldn't not by threatening to kill him if he spoke about Christ but threatening to kill anyone to whom he spoke about Christ.

How did you do it? I asked him. Well, every day the prisoners were given a 10 minute break to smoke. He didn't smoke so he'd take that 10 minute break and wander off by himself and there he would recite Psalm 27 the only scripture he had bothered to memorize.

The Lord is my light whom shall I fear? Wait for the Lord. Be strong. Do not let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the Lord. And then he would sing the only hymn he bothered to memorize the old rugged cross.

Every day 23 years. Psalm 27 the old rugged cross and he kept his sanity. You probably know that the Americans who made it through the hell of the POW camps in North Vietnam tell us that they made it because of those scripture verses and hymns they were forced to memorize in Sunday school.

When I heard that I was glad that I was raised in a Sunday school that forced me to memorize. They would tap out those words on their cells. Presbyterian pastor Ben Weir who was held in captivity in Lebanon tells us that the way he made it through those years was that every day he would hold a worship service in his head all alone in silence reciting the creed reciting verses of scripture he had memorized and reciting hymns he had memorized.

[ 35 : 02 ] Those who best make it through surgery are those who have something to sing in their head and something to recite in their souls. Memorize scripture.

Fourth every day or every day that you can take out a piece of paper and write down 20 things you're grateful for. I saw a lot of eyebrows go up there.

That little discipline has been essential for my spiritual well-being. In 1981 I suffered a year-long battle with severe depression and what kept me going there was writing down 20 things I'd be grateful for.

They don't have to be very fancy I can still remember the list. Fernando Valenzuela was pitching shutouts for the Dodgers. It doesn't matter just something you're grateful for every day.

You know we're hit all the time with negative things aren't we? This is a discipline to remember the positive things that God is doing around us. And then fifth select what I call triggers for praise.

[ 36 : 10 ] Triggers for praise. Select an object you see every day or an odor you smell every day or a sound you hear every day and tell your mind that each time you see that object or each time you smell that odor or each time you hear that sound you will stop for just a moment and worship.

So for example when you see a red light or a clock or the escape key on the computer stop and say something like stop and say something like oh God I thank you that you're in control of my life or when you smell a perfume or a dirty diaper or the smog stop and say oh Lord you're beautiful you're worthy of my adoration and I adore you or when you hear the alarm go off or the phone ring or your teenager's blaring rock music stop and say oh Lord I thank you for your mercy and grace I love you. Psychologists tell us you do anything for 30 days it'll become the habit of your life. I'll give you a money back guarantee on those five disciplines. 30 days to see what happens.

When we read the biblical record when we read church history we discover that those who best coped in this broken world were those who had developed the habit of worship.

Sometimes they sang those hymns of praise out of pain and sorrow sometimes out of joy and peace. either way in the act of praise they were free even if nothing changed.

[ 38 : 06 ] Let us pray. Living God I pray for myself for my family and for this new family that you would indeed work this miracle of freedom in our spirits.

That you would move so deeply in us that we would be able to respond to any situation by lifting our hearts in praise to you.

You are worthy of our ceaseless adoration and of our passionate love now and forever more. Amen.