

Spiritual Practices for Thriving Life

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Prayer's Power Leadership

Psalm 47 – Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy. For the Lord, the Most High, is awesome, a great king over all the earth. He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet. He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet. Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. For God is the king of all the earth; sing praises with a psalm. God is king over the nations; God sits on his holy throne. The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted.

★Write down one new insight you received today...

★Thinking...

- In what ways do you remind yourself of the glorious majesty of God?
- How has He been present when you have needed leadership at crucial moments?
- How does your self-image change when you start focused entirely on Jesus?

★Applying...

- Reflect on who God is independent of you. What would you tell Him about Himself without mentioning yourself?
- Try to see God throughout a day in the ways He is present not serving, providing, or communicating to you.
- End each day this week with a praise prayer to Him about Him.

★Praying...

- Father, you are glorious, just and merciful. You rule all the earth. Every created thing will honor you as Lord and King.
- Jesus, thank you for your love and grace, peace and health. You are great and I worship you.

I) True Leadership...

An individual life can be hard to navigate. Life in community is nearly impossible. Humans have sought leadership across history, people with vision and wisdom to benefit us all. Ability and charisma to adapt to the unexpected, overcome challenges, and motivate the community to respond. The Christian life is no different. Psalm 47 draws our attention to our Perfect Leader, the One who will develop us into our best selves and bring His people into the Promised Land.

♦ **Presence:** Significant celebrations. Crucial decisions. Crises. At these times, we need to hear from our leaders. We need to see them acknowledge the moment, behave calmly, assure us we are building toward our collective vision. We decry leaders who hide from these moments, leaving us to wonder if we have the right direction. God is always present as our leader, leading us steadily with conviction. Always speaking calmly and forcefully how we should go. It is *our*

October 16th, 2022

responsibility to put our attention on Him. We begin by celebrating His Lordship, clapping and shouting with joy (Ps 47:1). We continue as we “sing praises to God...sing praises to our King (v6).” We perceive His presence when we praise Him and seek Him with our senses. He meets the moment required of leadership.

♦ **Ability:** In those moments, we need more than presence. We need reassurance our leaders are up to the task. In celebrating accomplishments, do they know where we go next? Handling crucial decisions, do they possess wisdom to choose well? In crisis, will they adjust to new circumstances and shepherd us safely through? As we praise God, we are reminded of His victories. “He subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet (v3).” We see Him lead, going “up with a shout...with the sound of a trumpet (v5).” We see Him remain dignified sitting “on his holy throne (v8),” presiding over “the people of the God of Abraham (v9).” Nothing rattles God, no decision confuses Him. We can be confident in our Lord, our King.

II) Our Benefactor...

We need more than a competent leader. We need one who cares for us, leading the people to health, safety, and prosperity. One more concerned with responsibility than power. Sadly, most of our leaders fall short in character. They may lead competently, but this comes at the cost of weak or totally corrupt character. Those who pray praise discover the excellence of our Perfect Leader.

♦ **What's in it for me?** We experience effective yet self-serving leaders in our lives and throughout history. Business leaders who grow the company while making hundreds of times more income than the average worker. Government leaders who maintain peace while retaining power through illegitimate means. God warned His people human leaders would be corrupt, telling Samuel to “show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them...he will take your sons...your daughters...one-tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves (1 Sam 8:9-17).” Our Lord in contrast “subdued peoples under us, and nations under our feet. He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves (Ps 47:3-4).” He is already “king of all the earth (v7),” and “the shields of the earth belong (v9),” to Him. He has nothing to gain through corruption, no self-interest to serve by leading us. Rather than seek personal gain, our Perfect Leader “so loved the world that he gave his only Son (John 3:16).” As we praise Him, we search out what He has done and promised, and we find no fault, no failing.

♦ **Fear or justice?** Leaders invariably have to confront people who do not conform to their leadership. Those who do not fulfill their duties, resist the plan, disobey the law of the land. We want a just leader who will maintain order and decorum without ruling by fear with punishment. Those who will judge honestly and fairly. One who will provide mercy, restoring those who have gone astray. Too often, human leaders are quick to fire, fine, imprison, and permanently dismiss. Often enough we are tempted to confuse this with true justice. As we praise God for what He has done for us, we acknowledge that “The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham (v9).” Not only does God serve our needs at great cost to Himself, He invites those who are not His to join Him. None of us can tell our story without acknowledging “the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Col 1:27).”

III) Praise Prayers...

Praise psalms are often associated with praise and worship *music*, as if that *is* the form of praise and worship. They are fully *prayer*, even when put to song. Like wisdom prayers, they are a dialogue between us and God. In this case, He speaks first through His self-revelation. He makes Himself known to us. As He makes Himself known, our praise prayers are declarations of what we know of Him, how different and better He is than any other being. How much He loves and cares for us. We benefit from this conversation as our confidence builds, trust strengthens, hope grows.

♦ **Steadying influence:** Psalm 47 gives us a model for finding light in any circumstances. It is a prayer entirely about God. The only reference to us is what He has done for us, accepting His power and control to give and take away. This humbles us in our proudest moments, reminding us that “He chose our heritage for us (Ps 47:4).” He encourages us in our darkest times, revealing He has “gone up with a shout (v5),” going before us in all things. Finally, that nothing and no one is outside His sovereign power as “God is the king of all the earth (v7).”

♦ **In Him:** Gratitude and praise are related ways to return to center in our spiritual relationships, restoring God to His throne and us as His beloved children. Gratitude causes us to look at who He is and what He has done; praise reminding us of His majesty, faithfulness, holiness. From this perspective we are able to contemplate ourselves, our needs and desires, our purpose, our destiny.