Choosing to Praise

But may all who seek YOU rejoice and be glad in you; may those who love your salvation always say, Let God be exalted! — Psalm 70:4

This month I would like you and I to try something a little different. Its not too hard. You can do it. I have great faith in you. Are you ready? Okay, when I say “go” put down the newsletter. Lay it down on the table. Don’t worry you can come back and finish it in a little while. But for now, stop reading, get up and go praise God. Take five minutes and praise Him. On you mark, get set, go!

Umm…excuse me, you're still reading. I did say “go”. Its not that hard, really, I just want you to try it. Okay, here we go, praise God.

I have this funny feeling that most of you are not following directions (if you are you get an A+). Why is this difficult? Praise is in fact the very thing we were made for, so why does this seem to be such a strange request? Why don't we break out in praise to God whenever we think of Him? Well, to be fair, maybe some of us do. However it has been my experience that praising God is often awkward, even un-natural to most of us. We don't always know how to do it. When we do praise God it's either in church or because something really good happened.

Yet scripture tells us over and over that we should always rejoice in God, praise Him in every circumstance, and thank Him even when we don't feel like it.

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18
Give thanks to YHWH, for he is good; his love endures forever. 1 Chronicles 16:34
I will give thanks to the Lord because of his righteousness; I will sing the praises of the name of the Lord Most High. Psalm 7:17
And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Colossians 3:17
Give praise to YHWH, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. 1 Chronicles 16:8
I will sing YHWH’s praise, for He has been good to me. Psalm 13:6
Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. Hebrews 13:15

That is just a small sample. Page through the Psalms. Watch how Jesus lived. Scan through the epistles. Praise, thanksgiving, and rejoicing fill the pages of scripture. We are called to be people of praise.

Praising God is a choice. It is an action that we choose to do. Thanksgiving is not merely the fourth Thursday of November, it is a disciplined and purposeful action. In the end we don't praise God because we feel like it. We don’t worship Him merely because we should. Declaring God’s glory is not a magic formula. There is no one way to do it and doing it does not make things go our way. That it not what praise is about. We praise God because HE IS GOD! It's that simple. We thank God because GOD IS GOOD! We rejoice because JESUS IS OUR JOY. Its not complicated, but it is quite counter-intuitive to us as
sinful, rebellious creatures. Praise is an attitude we have lost, a skill that we have to re-
learn.

Choosing to praise God changes things, most importantly it changes us from the inside
out. Thanking God for His goodness alters the atmosphere around your heart. Rejoicing
in the Lord is fuel for the soul. When we make the choice to praise God we get realigned
spiritually. It is so easy to get caught up in the stuff of life that we start relying on
ourselves and forgetting who we really are. We get weighed down, stressed and anxious.
Choosing not to praise is exhausting. Thanklessness will wear you out. Joylessness
withers your soul.

Taking a moment to praise God reminds us we belong to God. Don't forget, your God is
the very same God who created the sky and knows every star by name. He poured the
oceans full and thought up every creature swimming in them. He grew the trees and
plans, made the bears and gophers, hawks and hedgehogs. He’s the same God who split a
sea in two so His people could get to the other side. He is still the God who fights for His
people and never loses. He’s the One who loves you so infinitely and lavishly that He
sent His only son to die in your place, raising Jesus on the third day, so that in Christ you
too will be raised. He is the One and Only creator and redeemer. He is the one who has
begun new creation, a holistic act of resurrection. He is your hope, your glory and your
righteousness. While life can often be quite daunting to us, it's not to Him. He is God and
there is no other.

Praise, thanksgiving and rejoicing is way of life. It begins with a choice. In fact a lifestyle
of praise is actually a series of choices that instill a habit in us and forge a new way to
live. That's why we praise Him. It can be as easy as singing a praise song or just saying I
praise you God because you are _________ and I thank you for ___________ and I
rejoice because __________. When we choose to praise God it changes us. Most of the
time, that was what needed the changing in the first place. So go ahead, try it. Praise God.