



Worthy of Praise

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The exact phrase “worthy of praise” appears in only one verse in our English Bibles – Philippians 4:8. It reads, “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things” (NASB1995). We usually (and I think correctly) take this as an exhortation to keep our thoughts clean and positive. But we’re about to see that this is not a standalone endeavor; it is part of a cycle of praise between us and God.

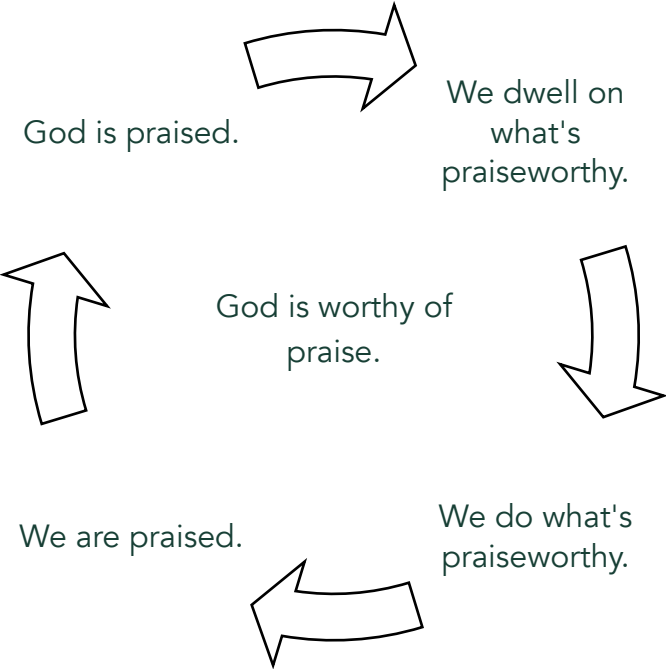
Look at what Paul adds in the next verse: “The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” (Phil 4:9). Thinking on good things is one stage in the cycle. Practicing good things comes next. Praiseworthy deeds proceed from praiseworthy thoughts (Luke 6:45).

It may seem strange to think of our good deeds as deserving praise, but it’s biblical. The same Greek word translated “worthy of praise” in Philippians 4:8 is used in 2 Corinthians 8:18 to describe a man esteemed by the churches because of his work for the gospel. The word also appears in Romans 2:29 and 1 Corinthians 4:5, which remind us that God is the one who knows the hearts of those who belong to Him, and He praises them. Receiving praise is the natural result of doing praiseworthy things. Although that is not our main motivation, we have every reason to feel good about doing things that please God.

You can probably guess what goes along with receiving praise: giving praise, specifically giving praise to God. Only because of His incredible love and mercy do we stand justified before Him. Ephesians 1 talks at length about how Christians reflect “the praise of His glory” (Eph 1:12, 14, cf. 1:6; Phil 1:11). The more we walk with God, the

more our faith will result in His “praise and glory and honor” both now and at the end of the world (1 Pet 1:7). While our manner of life offers indirect praise to God, our words praise Him directly. May we all say, “I call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised” (2 Sam 22:4; Ps 18:3).

Did you catch that? The Lord is “worthy to be praised.” What did Philippians 4:8 say we are supposed to dwell on? That which is *worthy of praise*. God is the source *and* the recipient of everything that is praiseworthy—ultimately, the cycle revolves around Him, and He ties it all together. Our thoughts, actions, and the things we’re praised for should all point to Him. At the same time, He is the foundation of those good things in our lives and the reason we are worthy when we follow Him.



Discussion Questions:

- 1. Which stage in the cycle is hardest for you to grasp or fulfill?
- 2. What does it mean to praise God?
- 3. Does accepting praise reflect a lack of humility?