

Dearly Beloved Sisters,

As we come to the last month of the year 2016, it is for us a month of counting down to the last days of the year and well as looking forward with excitement to embrace the new year 2017. One thing we must not fail to do is to pause and reflect on our journey throughout the year. We all did set goals and targets; perhaps we may want to ask ourselves the questions – did we achieve all, some or part of our set goals this year? Are we where we looked forward to being this year? Our Good Women's theme for this year was "My year of Overflowing Harvest"; how and in which areas of your life did you experience an overflow? My beloved sisters, though it may look like you might not have achieved all that you had set out to achieve this year, I want to assure that the fact that you are alive today, in good health, still able to breathe, hear and claim all the blessing of God upon your life, then you have indeed achieved much and it really does call for praising and thanking God. God is indeed mindful of us and He thinks of us daily. Psalms 8 reassures us that despite being mere mortal, God thinks and cares for us.

I want to share with us on the topic that says "The Power of Praise". We have much to gain when we devote our life and time praising God. Our bible passage will be **Psalm 100; Psalm 150**

Introduction:

Whenever we extend a helping hand to someone or go out of our way to do something extra ordinary for someone, whether they asked for it or we did it out of our own free will, we mostly always expect them to show some form of appreciation, and when this is not forthcoming, often times we get angered or feel offended. On the other hand, if the person shows appreciation, even ordinary thank you, the tendency is for us to feel good, and obviously will be happy to oblige the person when next he/she comes for help. So if we as human can feel this way with the little things that we do for others, how much more God in heaven, maker, giver, creator, provider, originator etc. of all

things. We can never over estimate the important of praise and thanks giving. There is something about praise, one may chose to call it thanksgiving, appreciation, or acknowledgement of what someone has done, whichever one you chose to call it, there is a strong power behind it.

In other to understand and appreciate the power of Praise, we will look at the 5 Ws' of praise! What... the why... the when... the where... and then what happens when we praise!

1. What is Praise?

Simply put, praise is the way we express our gratitude for an act of love shown to us. It means to applaud someone, to celebrate one's success, to talk of ones goodness, to say nice things about someone, to acclaim someone's authority and power over another. It could also mean to honour or reverence someone. To worship, to adore a superior power etc.

The online Cambridge dictionary in explaining it as a way of showing approval defines it as a way "to express admiration or approval of the achievement or characteristics od a person or thing". It also defined it as a way of worship by stating it as: "to honour, worship, and express admiration for a god" usually in songs.

The praise we are talking of here is the praise due to our God. So to praise God means to reverence Him for His goodness and mercy, His loving kindness, protection and provision. As Christians, we always say, " praise God"; most times we say it with out understanding the import of it. It is almost becoming a way of catching the attention of people in Christian gathering just the same way one will say "Hello" and people respond and say "Hi". Praise without meaning is an empty praise. We must therefore make sure that when we claim to praise God that our focus is on God.

True praise is to sincerely humble oneself before God in adoration of who He is, what He has done, is doing and is being believed to be able to do. There are some Hebrew words used in expressing praise to God: “Yadah which means praise, give thanks or confess”. “Zamar which means to sing praise”; “Halal (which is where Hallelujah originated from) means to praise, to honor or to commend”. They all connote the idea of giving thanks to the one who is worthy of praise. The book of Psalm is a collection of songs, poems and hymns all in adoration of God for so many things. Ps 21:13 encourages us to praise God for who He is and for His great and mighty power. It says *“Be thou exalted LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power”*.

2. Why Should Praise GOD?

No man in the pit can come out without first raising his voice to shout for help and raising his hand to be lifted out when the help arrives. So until we raise our voice and hand in praise to God for what He has done and is still doing, and what He is yet to do, we cannot come out of ‘our pit’.

We have seen from the explanation of praise that it should be done because of his goodness and loving kindness towards us. It is important for us to know that above that, it is also a command given to us by God in the bible. Ps 100:4 say to *‘Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise: thankful unto Him, and bless his name’*. When God speaks or commands, who are we to object.

Another reason to praise God is because He is our God and we proclaim it all the time. Ps 118: 28 -29 says; *“you are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever”*. In other words, we should praise God because He deserves our praise.

Again, it is very important that we understand more reasons why we should praise God at all times, failure to do so may amount to losing the fundamental basis of our act of praise, which in effect will make our supposed praise an empty

utterance. One other reason why we should praise and glorify God is because we need victory in every department of our live; the act of praise leads to achieving great and mighty things than we can't even think or imagine. In times of issues and challenges of life, the act of praise can deliver to us the victory that we need. Healing for an example is what we pray and desire to have at all times, praising God can lead to healing of our health, our marriages, our finances, our prayer life etc.

There are tons or reasons why we should give praise, all we need to do is just sit down and reflect on our past, and we will see how far we have come all by God's grace. A popular song writer Johnson Oatman Jr. in one of his songs published as far back 1897 encouraged us count out blessings and name them one by one, and we will be surprised by what the Lord has done. See part of the hymn:

When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.

- *Refrain:*

Count your blessings, name them one by one,
Count your blessings, see what God has done!
Count your blessings, name them one by one,
*Count your many blessings, see what God has done.
[*And it will surprise you what the Lord has done.]

3. When Should We Praise God?

Our Lord's Prayer begins with an attitude of praise and worship in reverence to God (Luke 11:2). Palms 100 verses 4 say to "enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise. These shows that praise is the key that will make it possible to walk into the presence of God, therefore we can confidently say that one of the times to praise God is when we come into His present or want to draw His presence down. When we praise God, His kingdom overflows to us.

Praising God should be done at all times because that is indeed the heavens

language.

"And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Revelation 19:5-7).

This passages reveals to us that praise is a continuous act in heaven, therefore if that is the case and our aim is to make heaven, our voices should forever be lifted in praise to God. The bible in 1 Thessalonians 5: 16-18 encourages us to "rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you". The summary of this is that we should have an attitude of praise and thanksgiving at all times, irrespective of our circumstance or challenges facing us.

Note however that God did not ask us to thank Him for misfortunes that befall us, because He does not send misfortunes to us, rather what He ask us to do is in any circumstance we may find ourselves, to remain joyful knowing and trusting that He will make a way for us where there seems to be no way.

In Psalm 34, David said "I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears."

It is therefore best to praise the Lord at all time, in the morning, afternoon and evening; in good times and in bad times; before we come into His presence and while we remain in His presence. More importantly, it is beneficial to praise God even when it is not convenient to do so. At such times, it will amount to giving God a sacrifice of our praise (Heb. 13; 15)

4. Where and How Should We Praise God?

Psalm 89 verse 1 says: *"I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations ..."* To sign of God's mercies and make known his faithfulness is to praise Him for His loving kindness. The psalmist said he will make this known to all generations – this then means that God should be praised every and anywhere.

The act of praising God should be a personal thing. No one can praise God on our behalf, if we come to church and just sit down watching others while they praise and worship God, we cannot go home with the conclusion that 'we' have worshiped God. God looks at us as an individual and not collectively. This is because we are all individually and uniquely made and the judgment of God will be answered individually.

God does so many different things for us; therefore our praise should come to Him individually. We should therefore praise God personally with our soul, body and spirit. There is a familiar song we sing: "I will praise Him, I will praise Him, I will praise... with my whole heart, with my whole self, precious people praise the Lord: So praising God should be done with our whole being.

Another way to praise God is to verbally praise Him with our month (lips). The psalmist in psalm 63 verse 3 says: "because your loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise you". Psalm 34: 1 also says " *I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth*". And psalm 89: 1 says "... with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness ...". No matter how much we love someone, if we don't say it out, it may be difficult to understand or for the person to believe us. Praising God with our lips is like offering Him with the fruits of our lips. Hebrew 13:15 says: " *By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name*".

We should also praise God with every part of our body. Our hands, knees, legs etc.

Psalm 47; 1 says: *"oh clap your hands all you peoples! Shout to God with the voice of triumph ..."*

Psalm 63:4 says "... I will lift up my hands in your name. Psalm 95:6 says a "... let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker ...etc.

Praising God should be done everywhere with our soul, spirit and body, with our emotions and our entire life. 1 Corth 10: 31 says: *"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God". Praise the Lord!*

5. What happens When we Praise God?

Maybe we should first ask ourselves what happens when our children comes to appreciate us for the little things we do for them! What happens when we appreciate and thank people for the things they did for us. The smile on the person's face alone reviles how happy they are and obviously shows the willingness to do more when approached. As parents we always look forward to getting things for our children because we see the joy in them when we give it to them. On the other hand, if you give something to someone or do an act of service and the receivers do not show any appreciation, we obviously will not be willing to do it again, even if they come asking for it.

A friend of mine once travelled and got a gift for her neighbor, when she gave her neighbor the gift, the reaction and the question that followed immediately (what is this? Why are you giving me a gift) threw my friend off balance and she vowed never to spend her money getting a gift for the neighbor, not only that, it also affected her attitude toward getting a gift for others as according to her "to avoid such embracement again.

Our God appreciates our praise, which is the only thing He asks from us. That is the only thing that gives Him joy. Indeed praising God is for our own benefit, the more we praise God the more blessings we receive, the more our life is transformed.

What happens when we praise God: God remodels our life, changes our situation,

uplifts our soul, and our perception of life changes. When we praise God, we experience the Almightyness of God. In the place of praise there is no sorrow nor fear; but joy and happiness envelops us

What prayers cannot do, praise will do even better. Praise ushers us into the presence of God and at the same time draws God from His throne to us. Praising God even when the situation is not as pleasant as we expect it to be reassures God of our faith and trust in Him. When we praise God, He fights all our battles and causes even our enemies to be at peace with us.

Conclusion:

As a child of God, if you want to experience a revived relationship with God, begin now to live a life of praise. Notwithstanding the situation, good or bad; even where you have every reason to give up, when you know not what else to do, just praise God; praise is the key to our open door. In the time of confusion, praise God and you will experience the peace that passes all understanding.

Sometimes God allows certain things to befall us so we can be broken and drawn closer to him. If we are spiritually alert, we will be able to see the hand of God in every of our circumstance and be able to know that it could have been a worst situation and in so doing have reason to thank God for diverting the situation.

The reason why many people have not reached their promised land is because they have not learnt to praise God, as they ought to. In Philipians 4:4 Paul said, "*Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice*". There was an emphasis on the word Rejoice and that is why he repeated it twice to show the importance. We are to always rejoice in the Lord; in fact it is a command and not a suggestion as of choice. Ingratitude is a stumbling block to our breakthrough; as long as we fail to obey the command we will remain in stagnation. This was the case of the children of Israel on their way to their promised land. A journey that would have taken them 40days took them 40 years all because of grumbling and ingratitude (Num 14). Their lack of praise to God kept them in stagnation for years. This will not be our situation in Jesus Mighty name, amen.

It is good to thank God, but much better to praise Him. In thanksgiving we mostly thank God for what he has done for us, whereas praise includes appreciating God for what He promised and is yet to come to past. Praise qualifies us to be uplifted and places us where God wants us to be.

Indeed the power of praise cannot be over emphasized. The book of psalm is filled with verses of praises to God, if you do not know how to start, pick up the book of Psalm and start to read and sturdy it.

My beloved sisters, as we look forward to embracing 2017, my prayer is that we will receive the understanding of how to appreciate God in all things and at all times in Jesus name, amen

May God bless and increase us even as we praise Him today in Jesus Name amen.

Yours in His service

Uzoaku Ike.