

What Do You Mean By That?

Understanding the Terms Associated with Praise

By Keith Gaddis

When we pray, we find ourselves using various phrases and words to express our praise to God. But there is often much more meaning to the words than we understand. What are we really saying to the Lord when we pray things like, “I put my faith and trust in You, sovereign God,” “I praise Your name and I bless You, Lord,” or “I magnify Your name and exalt You above all things”?

Each of these words has a much richer and deeper meaning. Understanding this can enhance your praise-prayer language.

Faith: Faith is trust in, or reliance on, God who is Himself trustworthy.¹ Faith is, in general, the persuasion of the mind that a certain statement is true (2 Thess. 2:13). Its primary idea is trust. A thing is true, and therefore worthy of trust.²

Trust: The Hebrew word meaning “trust” (batah) signifies the type of relationship that exists between two people. It means that each person can depend on the other person to follow through on what he or she promises, and that the other person will handle his or her heart with care.

In worship we tell God that we trust Him because we have learned that He will always do what He says He will do, and He will always handle our hearts with care, looking out for our best interests.

Praise: Praise can mean a variety of things:

- To speak of something in favorable terms—“to praise, to speak well of.”
- To speak of something as being unusually fine and deserving honor.
- To speak of the excellence of a person, object, or event—“. . . a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God” (Luke 2:13).
- To speak of a person in terms of that individual’s greatness—“For they heard them speaking with strange sounds and praising God’s greatness” (Acts 10:46, GNT).
- To express honor, with a possible implication of acknowledging the nature of someone or something—“Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles” (Rom. 15:9).

Psalm 63:3 (NKJV) declares, “. . . my lips shall praise You,” in a context of adoration toward the power, glory, and sanctity of the Lord.

Bless the Lord: So many word studies on “bless” turn out to refer to kneeling, the bodily position of humility before Him. Although it appears the definitions of bless and praise are very close, bless seems to indicate a profound root of humility as demonstrated by kneeling or bowing before God. For instance, the word for bless is used in 2 Chronicles 6:13 as “he kneeled down upon his knees” (KJV).

When we bless the Lord in worship with our words, it is not a trivial statement, but one that comes from the humility of knowing our place before Him.

Magnify the Lord: To magnify something is to make it larger and greater. In Psalm 34, the psalmist made the Lord greater than anything else or anyone else—exalting and lifting Him up. To magnify is to set something on a pedestal. The psalmist did this so that all could see Him.

In worship when we magnify the Lord, we are lifting Him up,

exalting Him, and saying to everyone, “Isn’t He incredible, isn’t He magnificent? See this matchless One. Join with me in celebrating and worshipping Him!”

Exalt: Raising or lifting up on high our Lord in what we say or what we do.³

Glory: The quality of God’s character that celebrates His beauty, power, or honor; a quality of God’s character that emphasizes His greatness and authority. God’s moral beauty and perfection of character and presence.⁴

So use these words as confident expressions of your love, praise, and honor of the Lord. Knowing their deeper meanings can only enhance your praise and worship of our great God.

¹ Achtemeier, P.J., Harper’s Bible Dictionary, 1st ed. (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, Society of Biblical Literature, 1985).² Easton, M.G., Easton’s Bible Dictionary (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893).³ Manser, M.H., Dictionary of Bible Themes: The Accessible and Comprehensive Tool for Topical Studies (London: Martin Manser, 2009).⁴ Youngbook, R.F., Bruce, F.F., Harrison, R.K., Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

KEITH GADDIS holds a Doctor of Worship Studies from Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies. He served in pastoral ministries for 20 years and is currently on staff at Associated Psychologists and Community Christian Counseling in Terre Haute, IN.

(C) 2014 Prayer Connect magazine.