

Get into the Study



5 MINUTES

DISCUSS: Question #1 on page 142 of the PSG: “What are some things you just don’t want to do without at Thanksgiving?”



GUIDE: Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 143 of the PSG. Introduce the importance of giving God our thanks and worship by reading or summarizing the text or by encouraging group members to read it on their own.

RECAP: Thanksgiving really happens because the giving of thanks is what brings satisfaction to our souls. We give thanks not so much because of the things we receive, but because of the One who gives. Psalm 100 reminds us who that One is, what He has done, and why we should thank Him continually.

SPECIAL FOCUS

Give Thanks to God

THE POINT

Our thanks and worship belong to God.

LIFE CONNECTION

Thanksgiving Day is acknowledged by many—both church and unchurched—as a day for giving thanks. In everyday conversations, we hear individuals say, “I am thankful that ...” What is often missing is the object of thankfulness. To whom is our thanksgiving directed? While it is fitting and appropriate to be thankful to individuals in our lives, the ultimate object of our thanks is to be God. Psalm 100 reminds us who God is, what He has done, and why we should thank Him.

THE PASSAGE

Psalm 100:1-5

THE SETTING

The collectors of the psalms arranged them into five books, each concluding with a similar expression of praise to the God of Israel. These divisions are noted in many Bibles. Psalm 100 is in Book IV and is one of the most familiar and loved psalms for the people of God. The writer told of the joy of entering the sacred site and worshiping in the presence of God with other pilgrims.

PSALM 100:1-2

- 1 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.**
- 2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.**

KEY WORD: **Serve** (v. 2)—Translations sometimes render this word as “worship.” The Bible commends us to the service of God, whether it be in public worship or daily obedience.

1 ▶ Verse 1. The Hebrew title for the Book of Psalms means “praises.” Though we generally think of all psalms as praise hymns to God, there are actually a number of different and distinct categories of psalms in our collection. Royal psalms had to do with honoring the king as God’s representative on earth, or sometimes describing the rite of inaugurating a new king in Israel. Wisdom psalms offer advice on life choices so that we can walk as God intended. They exhort us to turn from evil and live lives of obedience before the Lord. Lament psalms portray the injustices of life, the suffering of righteous people, and sometimes the hope for vindication over one’s enemies. Some have called the lament psalms “pre-Christian,” and, indeed, Jesus taught a different way of dealing with one’s enemies. But the aloneness we sometimes feel during our suffering is timeless. Most of the lament psalms include the hope that God will hear and deliver; thus these songs are not completely without encouragement.

About half of the psalms directly or indirectly offer praise to God. Twenty-six of the psalms, about one-sixth of the total collection, are straight-forward hymns of praise, often with the element of thanksgiving as well. Sometimes the praise includes the community and sometimes the praise is offered by individuals. Interestingly, Psalm 100 is one of many “community” worship materials—psalms intended to be sung as part of communal worship rather than an individual expression of praise.

The writer described the joy of corporate worship rather than an individual worship experience with God. He indicated throngs of people gathered for worship. Though we certainly worship God at other times and in other places and alone, there is always value in corporate worship in a special place set aside for worship. The Old Testament prescribes a number of feast days and their attendant celebrations (Lev. 23), so it may be that the particular occasion that spawned Psalm 100 was one of

GUIDE: Call attention to “The Point” on page 143 of the PSG: “Our thanks and worship belong to God.”

PRAY: Transition into the study by asking God to help the group understand the importance of worship. Thank Him for being utterly worthy of our worship.

Study the Bible

Psalm 100:1-2



10 MINUTES

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Psalm 100:1-2 on page 144 of the PSG.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Verse 1 calls God’s people to “Make a joyful noise unto the LORD.” Take a moment to obey that call as a group. Encourage everyone to yell out some of the blessings they are most thankful for—so that the whole group shouts at the same time. Conclude with a round of clapping as an expression of your gratitude to God.

GUIDE: Use Commentary **1** on pages 143-146 to help explain how God loves all the world.

DISCUSS: Question #2 on page 146 of the PSG: “**What are some ways we can serve the Lord with gladness?**”

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from pages 144-145 of the PSG. How are we to give thanks? The opening verses suggest three ways:

1. **We can make a joyful noise.** *The Hebrew word for joyful noise referred to shouting, such as when loyal subjects cried out when the king appeared among them.*
2. **We can serve.** *The word “serve” is sometimes translated “worship.” We should worship and serve the Lord simply because He is worthy of our service and worship.*
3. **We can come.** *This refers to public worship since the psalm overall describes God’s people coming to God’s temple. We gather together to worship, serve, and collectively express our thanks to God.*

the prescribed days for public gathering. If this was a prescribed feast day, we can imagine faithful Israelites came from throughout the promised land as worship pilgrims seeking to honor God.

We’re unsure if this worship occurred before the division of the kingdom following Solomon’s death. Thus the worshipers could be from Israel during the era of the United Kingdom, or from Judah, the later Southern Kingdom. However, the writer declared **all ye lands** must praise the Lord. Sometimes the Old Testament isolated Israel as God’s unique treasure. Deuteronomy 10:15 declares: “Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.” But it’s also true that Scripture speaks of God’s love for all the world. The Old Testament prophet Jonah, for example, learned through his unique experience how God showed love for pagan, non-Israelite people. Believers today have greater understanding of God’s love based on the later revelation of His Son, Jesus.

The Old Testament reflects a progressive understanding of God. As God chose to reveal Himself to His people over time and in various ways, they came to understand Him more fully. The writer of Hebrews noted: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son” (Heb. 1:1-2). Believers today understand that the New Testament amplifies the scope of God’s concern. As children we were taught, “For God so loved the world” (John 3:16). John in Revelation spoke of people from “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” offering praise to the Lord as priests (Rev. 5:9-10). Christians affirm the call for people of all nations and ethnicities to join in the work of God’s kingdom. An old hymn, “In Christ There Is No East or West,” reminds us, “In Christ there is no east or west, In him no south or north, But one great fellowship of love Throughout the whole wide earth.”¹

The writer exhorted worshipers to **make a joyful noise unto the LORD**. Worship described here involved cries of victory and “singing” (v. 2). Old Testament worship was often spirited with movement and exclamations of praise. King David once danced before the Lord “with all his might” as he jubilantly strode in the procession bringing the ark of the covenant to its

new home (2 Sam. 6:14). Members of our congregations sometimes joke about not having musical training or musical ability but say they can instead make a “joyful noise”! Nowhere does Scripture require worshipers to have musical expertise as a prerequisite for singing. Everyone is invited to join in our songs of praise. Christianity has been called a “singing” religion. Martin Luther once remarked that in singing, we all become preachers telling out the good news. Corporate song remains a significant part of worship, and we are commanded to sing praise whether we’re musically schooled or not. Just as singing “The Star Spangled Banner” brings us together as a nation and singing “Happy Birthday” brings us together as families, singing to the Lord brings us together as congregations. We raise our voices united as the family of God—young and old, men and women, and people from every ethnicity—in the praise of the Lord.

Verse 2. The imperative in the phrase **serve the LORD** in verse 2 can also be rendered “worship.” The concepts are related. We frequently refer to the worship activities of our churches as the *worship service*. We might say, “Our worship service is at 8:30 a.m.” We do serve God by gathering in His name to offer praise. This is an important part of our spiritual lives and spiritual growth. The writer of Hebrews exhorted: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another (Heb. 10:24-25). Corporate worship is vital. But we also continue to serve God in daily devotional practices and by helping others in need. Pastors frequently remind us of the “mission field” outside the four walls of the sanctuary. That is where we serve God seven days each week. Our service begins as we worship together and continues as we live lives of daily service.

The preeminent worship attitude in these verses is joyfulness. We worship Him with **gladness**. Some Old Testament worship had a solemnity. The army of Israel wept and fasted as they sought the Lord before battle (Judg. 20:26). The gathered in Jerusalem wept in sorrow when they heard the reading of the newly-discovered book of the law and realized they had disobeyed God’s commands (Neh. 8:9). And sometimes, as in this case, Old Testament worship demonstrated overflowing joy. These pilgrims to Jerusalem rejoiced in their opportunity to come to the dwelling place of God to offer thanksgiving.

DISCUSS: Question #3

on page 146 of the PSG:
“What are some obstacles to serving the Lord with gladness?”

Alternate: What are some joyful songs that you love to hear or sing?

TRANSITION: We are to serve the Lord with gladness. In the next verses, we see that we are also to acknowledge that the Lord is God.

Study the Bible

Psalm 100:3



15 MINUTES

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Psalm 100:3 on page 146 of the PSG.

GUIDE: Use Commentary **2** on pages 146-147 to help explain what it means to acknowledge the Lord.

DO: Direct group members to complete “Engage” on page 150 of the PSG to allow group members to reflect upon their own thankfulness.

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 147 of the PSG. We see two aspects of God's identity in verse 3:

1. God is our Creator. *If*

we fail to acknowledge God as our Creator, we get in all kinds of trouble. Various theories seek to explain away the need for God. In doing so, though, everything becomes cold and mechanical. Any notion of purpose in life is lost. We lose our sense of beauty, majesty, and wonder—and with that we also lose our propensity to be thankful. If we got where we are by ourselves, we have no one but ourselves to thank for anything.

2. God is our Shepherd.

Acknowledging God only as Creator can make Him seem distant and uninvolved in our day-to-day lives, but God is also our Shepherd. Describing us as “his people, and the sheep of his pasture” makes God personal and close to us. God as our Shepherd is a very personal expression, one that’s repeated often in Scripture.

Worshippers today know the same emotions experienced by our Old Testament forebears. Indeed, a single worship event may evoke a number of emotions as it unfolds. It is a time of solemnity for us when we acknowledge sin and offer confession before the Lord. We, too, recognize our disobedience to the Lord's commands. We come into His presence with dirty hands, having done things we shouldn't do, with dirty feet having gone places we shouldn't go, and with dirty hearts having had thoughts we shouldn't think.

But we are happy to acknowledge God's mercy and forgiveness. When people trust Christ and declare their commitment to Him in baptism and church membership, there is joy. And in singing hymns of salvation and hymns about heaven, our joy is compounded. Psalm 122:1 reminds us, “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.” ◀

PSALM 100:3

3 Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

KEY WORD: **Know** (v. 3)—This is a call to remember, or an admonition not to forget the Lord's ultimate kingship. He is the only living God and only Creator.

2 ▶ Verse 3. The psalmist offered the foundation for the requisite joyful praise inherent in worship. We praise God for three major reasons. First, we **know** that Yahweh is God. To **know** that He is God is much more than merely giving intellectual assent, a quick tip of the proverbial hat to an accepted cultural belief. It reflects, rather, a personal knowledge that makes a difference in how one lives. The word **LORD** (in small caps as opposed to “Lord”) in the Old Testament is a way to express the sacred Hebrew name of God. It is the name by which God identified Himself to Moses when Moses asked whom he should say had sent him to Egypt to free God's people (see Ex. 3:14). The name *Yahweh* is derived from the verb translated “I AM” in that verse. He is the God who is the only God. The Bible never dignifies other gods—they are all false gods. The apostle

Paul argued in a well-known passage about the propriety of believers eating meat having been offered to idols. He said that the sacrifice was offered to “nothing” since there are no other gods: “We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one” (1 Cor. 8:4). Thus we worship the Lord because He is the only God and there is none else. It is this God who has sought us in our sinfulness with the offer of pardon and salvation. He is the only living God and the only source of mercy and forgiveness.

Second, we recognize the reality that **it is he that hath made us**. The Book of Genesis declares that God is the Creator of our world. But as Creator, He transcends His creation. That is, He is separate and apart from it and superior to it. We don’t worship creation as if it were God (pantheism), but we worship Him in acknowledgment of the grandeur of His creation and His majesty as revealed in His creation. The apostle Paul lamented that evil people worshiped things created rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). More than simply creating the world we enjoy around us, our Creator, God, made *us* and gave *us* life and a beautiful world to enjoy and care for. Part of the distinct nature of God is that He is life-giving, unlike the false gods who have no life and thus cannot give life. Such lifeless gods can promise nothing and give nothing. Since the Lord is our Creator, **we are his people**. The response of gratitude for the gift of creation is a natural component of worship.

Third, the people of God know joy because God watches over us. The psalmist used a familiar image of God as shepherd to His people. Shepherding was a common occupation in the Old Testament. We read of Abraham, Amos, and David, among others, tending the sheep. The shepherd valued the well-being of the sheep before his own well-being. David told of battling a lion and a bear to protect the flock (1 Sam. 17:34-35). Just as the shepherd stepped in front of the flock to protect them from danger, so the Lord is worshiped as the Defender of His people. The epitome of the shepherd’s love and care for the sheep is Jesus’ declaration: “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep” (John 10:11). The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is common in Christian art. Artists portray Him standing with the shepherd’s staff and gently holding a lamb in His arms. The image of the shepherd continues to convey protection and love. Our God is a shepherd who offers care and protection to His people. For these three reasons we worship the Lord with gladness and singing (Ps. 100:2). ◀

DISCUSS: Question #4 on page 148 of the PSG: “**Why is it so important that we acknowledge that God made us?**”

Alternate: How has God demonstrated that He is your Shepherd?

RECAP: As we acknowledge and thank God as our Creator and our Shepherd, let’s remember this beautiful phrase: “we are his.” Circumstances will not always be kind. But no matter what, because we have acknowledged Him, we are His.

TRANSITION: In the next verses, we see that we are to give thanks to Him and bless His name.

Study the Bible

Psalm 100:4-5



10 MINUTES

READ: Ask a group member to read aloud Psalm 100:4-5 on page 148 of the PSG.

SUMMARIZE: Highlight the main points from page 149 of the PSG. The invitation to worship was based upon the character of God. Verse 5 points to three specific traits of God:

1. **God is good.** *The gods other nations worshiped were not good. They were perceived as being selfish and capricious. But the God of the Bible is always good. When He created the world and all that is in it, He saw what He had made was good—“very good” (Gen. 1:31). His will for us can only be described as “good, and acceptable, and perfect” (Rom. 12:2).*
2. **God is love.** *Because He Himself is love (1 John 4:8), God’s faithful love and mercy endures forever. God has many attributes, but nothing demonstrates the heart of God for us like His love. We respond with love to Him “because he first loved us” (v. 19).*
3. **God is faithful.** *We live in a world that is always changing. In the midst of such a rapidly changing world, it’s comforting to know that God Himself is unchanging and his truth endures.*

PSALM 100:4-5

4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

5 For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.

KEY WORDS: **His courts** (v. 4)—Joyful participants came to worship, first at the tabernacle then later at the temple. The complex included open courtyards where people gathered for readings, prayers, and sacrifices.

3 ▶ Verse 4. Psalm 100:4 portrays the architecture of the temple. The Lord gave King David plans for the temple—the temple the king wished to build himself but was prevented from doing so because of his being a man of war (1 Chron. 22). David carefully explained the construction details to his son (28:11). Solomon built and dedicated the temple after his father’s death, and it served as the primary worship center for God’s people for nearly four hundred years. The central feature of the temple was the ark of the covenant, constructed under Moses’ leadership. The ark contained the stone tablets of the law given to Moses (Ex. 40:20). Later a container of manna and Aaron’s rod were added (Heb. 9:4). The ark represented the presence of God among His people (Ex. 25:21-22). The ark was kept in the holy of holies, or most holy place. Priests and their helpers could enter the holy place, but only the high priest could enter the holy of holies. Though these holy sites were the locale of Yahweh worship, the Israelites could only draw near without entering. They came through the temple **gates** and stood in the open area. Thus this writer referred to the **courts** or courtyards where the people gathered for sacrifices and to experience the presence of the Lord. No doubt, they gathered as near as possible to observe the holy ritual, much as modern sports fans wish to sit behind home plate or on the 50-yard line.

Worshippers entered the gates of the temple with **thanksgiving** and continued to the courts adjacent to the holy place in **praise** to the Lord. Some have suggested this as a progression in worship intensity. Seen thusly,

thanksgiving is the first step in worship and praise is a second and deeper step in the worship journey. However, it could be that the writer simply used “synonymous parallelism.” This is a common poetic device where the poet stated a concept in two different ways for emphasis. Synonymous parallelism is seen in verse 5: “his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.” The second phrase is a restatement of the first and is used for emphasis. In the same way we might say, “The Lord is good to me; the Lord is really good to me.” In synonymous parallelism, thanksgiving and praise would be understood as synonyms. Whatever the case, the writer insisted genuine worship is filled with thanksgiving and praise when we enumerate God’s character and gifts and express gratitude to Him.

We not only give thanks to Him, but we **ble**ss his **name**. We dare not misuse His name, but rather use His name in blessing (Ex. 20:7). To bless is to add value to. We add value to the Lord’s name in the eyes of those around us by enumerating His character and good deeds in public speech. God’s name is honored when we tell of His mighty deeds and His compassionate acts toward others. Blessing the name of God encourages other believers. It also witnesses to those who are not believers. We speak of His blessings to those who need His blessings in their lives.

Verse 5. In contrast to pagan deities of the Ancient Near East, the **LORD is good**. He is a God of judgment, to be sure, but He overflows with **mercy** for His people. The Hebrew word speaks of the eternal loving and merciful nature of God, reflected in the declaration of how He “so loved” when He sent His Son (John 3:16).

God proved faithful to His people in the Old Testament, and, indeed, the writer assured us He will remain faithful for **all generations**. Places, customs, and history are ever-changing, but believers are assured of God’s faithfulness despite the rigors of life’s challenges. The people of God may feel alone just as the writers of lament psalms did in their human weaknesses. But we also have the assurance of God’s never-failing love and faithfulness (**truth** carries the meaning of steadfastness or fidelity). Another old hymn expresses this well: “O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come.”² He who was faithful will yet be faithful. He is worthy of our thanksgiving, praise, and worship. ◀

1. John Oxenham, “In Christ There Is No East or West,” Public Domain.
2. Isaac Watts, “O God Our Help in Ages Past,” Public Domain.

GUIDE: Use Commentary **3** on pages 148-149 to help explain the background for the architecture of the temple.

RECAP: We saw in verse 2 that our service to others is an act of worship to God, but when we get to verse 4, the emphasis turns to the corporate gathering of God’s people. Applied to Christians, this can be seen as an exhortation for us to gather as a church. The biblical writer reminded us in Hebrews 10:24-25: “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” The people of God are strengthened, and God is blessed when we gather together for thanks and praise.

DISCUSS: Question #5 on page 150 of the PSG: **“How have you seen God’s faithfulness affect generations of people?”**

Alternate: Why is it important to regularly proclaim the goodness of God to those around us?

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Invite group members to identify favorite songs of thanksgiving. Encourage someone to lead the group in singing a few of these songs. Ask members to identify other ways we can offer thanksgiving to God. Close with a season of prayer giving thanks to the Lord.

GUIDE: Refer back to “The Point” for this session: **“Our thanks and worship belong to God.”**

ENGAGE

Individually, rate yourself from 1 to 5 of how thankful to God you are in each of these life situations (1 = not thankful at all; 5 = very thankful). Then come back together as a group to compare your ratings.

- _____ When I achieve something I worked hard for
- _____ When I catch a lucky break
- _____ When I make it through a terrifying moment/situation (like barely avoiding a car accident)
- _____ When I worship at church
- _____ When I fail
- _____ When I celebrate Thanksgiving Day
- _____ When I’m stuck in a desperate situation

What common trends do you see about your gratitude?

Together, read 1 Thessalonians 5:18 and discuss what it means to live it out.

LIVE IT OUT

We have many opportunities to offer thanks and worship to God. Choose one of the following applications:

- ▶ **Shout.** Consider a short sentence of praise for the Lord and look for every opportunity to share it with others this week. “God is good.” “I’ve been more blessed than I deserve.” “Thank the Lord for _____ !” are some examples.
- ▶ **Serve.** Whether it is service in the church or in the community, our service can be an act of worship. Find a ministry in your church or even a community organization where you can serve others and demonstrate the love of Christ.
- ▶ **Start.** Begin a neighborhood Bible study for adults or a backyard Bible club for kids in your home or in a safe neutral location nearby (playground, field, clubhouse, etc.). Help others learn the joy of gathering together to worship God.

Live It Out



5 MINUTES

READ: Direct group members to page 151 of the PSG. Encourage them to choose one of the applications to carry out this week.

Wrap It Up

SUMMARIZE: Read or restate this idea from page 150 of the PSG:

Every generation can enter “into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise.” His goodness, love, and faithfulness lead us to “be thankful unto him, and bless his name.”

PRAY: Thank God for His many gifts to His children, especially our salvation. Ask Him to help group members be bold in sharing about this giving God so that others may come to know Him.



EXTRA!

Free additional ideas for your group are available at

BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra