

A Song of Thanksgiving

All right, brother. You always come through the doors praising God!" said the usher who was holding a tray of Communion elements. Jayden was singing Hezekiah Walker's "Every Praise Is to Our God."

"Every word of worship with one accord," continued Jayden, selecting one of the elements. "Praise the Lord, sister."

Once in the sanctuary, Jayden sat on the right side of the room, with the song still on his lips. He arrived about three minutes before the countdown. Their church had a five-minute countdown digital clock that they broadcasted on the screens prior to worship.

Around him, people were getting in place for the morning worship. Jayden took a seat and bowed his head. He was grateful for another opportunity to praise God. His three-year-old was feeling much better, but Iyana wanted her to stay home for extra measure.

He had much to be thankful for: a godly, wonderful wife; a precious baby girl; a good job; his health and strength; a great church and pastor; and most of all, an awesome Lord and Savior! He was having some challenges with his older brother; and there had been some nagging, abdominal pain that he needed to have his doctor check out. But God was certainly due his praise.

Jayden lifted his head and sprung to his feet. The digital clock read: "9:58." It was almost time to get the party started. The Lord's praise was due!

1. *How has giving thanks to God lifted your spirit?*
2. *Do you sometimes find it hard to praise joyfully? Why?*
3. *How do songs of thanksgiving remind you of God's character?*

LESSON FOCUS: Enter God's presence with joy, praise, and thanksgiving.

Worship the Lord

Psalm 100:1-3 KJV

A Psalm of praise.

1 Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.

2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing.

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.

Psalm 100:1-3 NIV

A Psalm. For giving grateful praise.

¹Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.

²Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

³Know that the LORD is God.

It is he who made us, and we are his;

we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

The KJV refers to Psalm 100 as an ode of "praise," while the NIV adds "for giving grateful praise." Throughout Israel's history, God demonstrated His unwavering commitment to His chosen people.

Verse 1 begins with the exhortation that the entire "earth" participate in praise. Everything and everyone in creation is to give God the worship He deserves. A king over one country might be deserving of reverence from the people in that one location. The God of the universe deserves worship and praise from everywhere and everyone.

The same Hebrew word translated "shout for joy" sometimes refers to the loud sound soldiers made in a war cry (see Josh. 6:5, 10, 20). In Psalm 100:1, God's children have just as much energy and enthusiasm in their "joyful noise" (KJV) as in a fierce battle cry.

The psalmist imagines the worshipers joining together to express their "gladness" (v. 2) for His grace and goodness. They would signal this gratitude in God's sacred "presence" through "singing" with joy. Their songs were often accompanied by instruments. In this psalm,

worshippers are overflowing with joy, which they openly express for the Lord. This psalm expresses that overflowing joy through emphasizing how loud the people worshiped.

As God's children assembled for corporate worship, they would declare that He was their creator (v. 5). He brought everything into existence. He created the living things—every person, every sea creature, every bird. He created the heavenly bodies—the sun, moon, and stars. Everything that you can see only exists because He created it. Because He is the creator of all things and all people, the Israelites praised Him.

The worshipers rejoice in that they “are his” (v. 3). They belong to the God who created everything. The Israelites belong to a loving God who has taken them in as His.

God's children are His prized possession. The Israelites celebrated this truth in their worship (Ex. 6:7; 19:5; Deut. 7:6; Isa. 43:1, 21; 44:2). They were not only His “people,” but also the “sheep of his pasture” (Ps. 100:3). God protected and provided for His people, like a shepherd guiding and watching over his well-tended flock (Ps. 95:6–7). The worshipers in Psalm 100 were overjoyed as they reflected on His guiding staff, and worshiped Him for it.

The Old Testament uses the shepherd motif many times, such as in the Psalms (such as Psalm 23; lesson 10). Ezekiel 34 records the Lord's prophecy against Israel's wicked rulers who did not “take care of the flock” (vv. 1–8). God pledged to hold them accountable (vv. 9–10). God promised to rescue His abused sheep from their enemies' clutches. God pledged to search for His scattered sheep, bring them back to their homeland, and feed them (vv. 11–13). The restored flock would graze in lush pastures and lie down in peace (vv. 14–15).

It was important to the Israelites that they would be ruled by a good shepherd. God contrasts these kings who did not care for their flock. He is the perfect shepherd, who would bring His sheep into safety and provide them with sustenance. The Israelites praised God for being the

shepherd they needed.

4. *What was the entire creation summoned to do?*
5. *What attitude should believers have in their relationship with the Lord?*
6. *What truths about the Lord did the psalmist affirm?*
7. *How did the psalmist portray God's relationship with His children?*

Give Thanks to the Lord

Psalm 100:4-5 KJV

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.

Psalm 100:4-5 NIV

⁴Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

⁵For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

The psalmist invites God's children to enter the "gates" of His temple (perhaps as a ceremonial procession) with an attitude of "thanksgiving." They would affirm that God rescued them from their enemies and provided for all their needs. The worshipers were also to offer "praise" to God in the "courts" of the sanctuary, such as words conveying homage to Him.

The "gates" and "courts" (Ps. 100:4) refer to the temple that Solomon built, where the Psalms may have been used in worship. The temple would have been regarded as a symbol of Israel's national identity. It functioned as the focal point for the religious, cultural, political, and economic life of the twelve tribes. In 586 BC, the Babylonians destroyed the temple and looted its treasures, as well as demolished Jerusalem and its walls.

Despite the suffering that God's people experienced, they continued to believe that He cared for them. Verse 5 affirms God's inherent goodness, along with the everlasting nature of His "mercy" (KJV).

The psalmist draws attention to God's "faithfulness" (NIV). This can refer to the Lord's trustworthiness. He is loyal to His people. He made a covenant with Moses on Mount Sinai, and promised that "although the whole earth is" His, they "will be for [Him] a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6). He has an unwavering commitment to His people.

God's devotion to the people of Israel is everlasting. Just as His "love" for them lasts "forever," so, too, His "faithfulness" (or fidelity) to the promises He made to them endured throughout "all generations."

In giving "praise" to "his name" (v. 4), the Israelites were worshiping God for who He is. They were not simply worshiping Him for the actions He performed for them, such as being a good shepherd. They praised Him also for His own sake. The name of God, Yahweh, reminds worshipers of God as a whole. It is a humble expression in which the very syllables of God's name are deserving of praise. Outside of any wonder He may perform for His people, the Lord is worthy of all praise.

Nothing in "all creation" (Rom. 8:39) can drive a wedge between the "love of God" and His children, especially as it is seen in the Lord Jesus. "Neither height nor depth, nor anything else" throughout the universe could "separate" believers from Jesus' pardon, along with His "love" (Ps. 100:5) and "faithfulness," toward those whom He "called" (Rom. 8:28), "foreknew" (v. 29), "justified," and "glorified" (v. 30) in the Son.

Like the Israelites who praised God for who He is and what He did, so do believers today.

8. *What mindset should believers have when they gather for worship?*

9. *What reason did the psalmist give for expressing gratitude to God?*

How to Be Thankful

People must be incredibly joyful while giving thanks. That might seem obvious, but this joyfulness includes shouting and singing to the Lord as they worship Him: "Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs" (Ps. 100:1-2).

These people are shouting and singing because He is the Lord of creation. He has created every one of them: "It is he who made us, and we are his" (v. 3). No one is a cosmic accident. Everyone is an amazing creation, God's artistry, crafted in ways that science still doesn't understand. The human body, in all its marvelous complexity, gives a glimpse into the great work God has done in creating every individual person.

We must also understand that we belong to Him: "We are his people, the sheep of his pasture" (v. 3). When a person tries to live apart from the "pasture," he might self-destruct. When a person knows and follows God, she belongs in His safe pasture.

The only shepherd worth following is a good shepherd. God "is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (v. 5). How often do you find a love that lasts forever? Or a person who loves you faithfully regardless of what you say and do?

When people know how to be thankful, they can "enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise." With great joy and a better understanding of who He is, they can "give thanks to him and praise his name" (v. 4).

10. *Why is being thankful tied to understanding God is our creator and shepherd?*

11. *When was the last time you felt as if you were in God's very presence?*

12. *Can you be a "quiet" person, yet still be incredibly joyful in the Lord?*

Into His Presence

Since a proclamation by President Lincoln in 1863, Americans have been celebrating Thanksgiving. Sadly, this holiday is often more about food and football than giving to God the praise and thanks He deserves.

► *This week, commit to making the upcoming holiday a time of giving thanks and celebrating. Plan to have singing, Scripture reading, prayer, and other activities that will lead you into His presence as you praise His name.*

KEY VERSE

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

— Psalm 100:4 KJV

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name.

— Psalm 100:4 NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of November 18 through November 24

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** Matthew 1:18–23—God Is with Us through Christ.
- Tue.** Exodus 33:12–23—My Presence Will Go with You.
- Wed.** Exodus 34:1–9—A Glimpse of the Merciful God.
- Thu.** Psalm 16—Complete Joy in God's Presence.
- Fri.** Matthew 18:15–20—Where Two or Three Are Gathered.
- Sat.** Matthew 28:16–20—I Am with You Always.
- Sun.** Psalm 139:1–12—God Searches and Knows Us.

PSALMS OF THANKSGIVING AND PRAISE

We live in a world of chaos, sin, and grief. But believers know that God is in control. Even while living in a broken world, we are invited to worship God. Throughout the psalms for this quarter, the writers contrast God's perfect power, love, and care against human leaders' weakness. God is above everything and deserves praise.

The psalmist warns that earthly power means nothing to God: "the lowborn are but a breath, the highborn are but a lie" (Ps. 62:9). Only God, our "rock," "refuge," and "salvation," has unfailing power. He alone provides what we need. The psalmist's soul is able to "find rest in God," for his "hope comes from him" (v. 5). God can shelter us from all danger. We worship Him for His protective power.

As the shepherd, God protects and provides for His people: They "walk through the darkest valley," yet "fear no evil" (Ps. 23:4). In the dangers of this world, The Lord provides peace and goodness: His "rod and staff" grant comfort (v. 4). God cares for His sheep physically—leading them to "quiet waters" (v. 2)—and spiritually—the "soul" (v. 3). The psalmist knows that goodness and love will "follow" him all his days (v. 6).

Human plans and power turn to dust; human schemes are a frail joke before the mighty power of an eternal God. The psalmist writes, "Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing" (Ps. 146:3–4). God does not pass away. He is "faithful forever" (v. 6). He alone is worthy of our praise: our creator, healer, and sustainer. He "reigns forever" (v. 10). Psalm 150 encourages all creation to praise God with music and dancing. This psalm reminds readers of God's "acts of power" and "surpassing greatness" (v. 2). Worship in this psalm is overflowing with joy.

Psalm 100 calls for joyous worship in observance of God's character and faithfulness. The psalmist writes, "Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his . . . enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise" (Ps. 100:3–4). God is "good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations" (v. 5).

In each of the previous psalms, God establishes Himself as loving and powerful. Psalm 139 shows that God intimately knows the psalmist. The writer reflects, "You have searched me, LORD, and you know me" (Ps. 139:1). Because God sees his every moment, the writer stands in awe, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain" (v. 6). No one is outside of God's reach (v. 8). The omniscient God is worthy of all our praise



A young man holds a lyre in this illustration from a Greek vase of about 400 BC. Psalm 150 tells us we may "praise [God] with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre" (vs. 3).

Katolophyromai



These stairs once led to the Huldah Gate in Jerusalem that opened into the courts of Herod's temple. Psalm 100 says we should "Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name" (v. 4).
Jerusalem Archaeological Park/brionv



A shepherd with his rod and staff leads his sheep through the Jordan Valley, a reminder that if the Lord is our shepherd, we will "fear no evil" (Ps. 23:4) because God's "rod" and "staff" will comfort us.
American Colony Photo Department/Public Domain



The cliffs and caves of Arbel in northern Israel illustrate David's praise that God is our "rock," "fortress," and "salvation" (Ps. 62:6) especially in times of trouble.
Lior Golgher



A cave on Mount Carmel in Israel. David said, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there" (Ps. 139:7-8).
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Sunset on the Mediterranean Sea in Israel. Psalm 146 praises God as "the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—he remains faithful forever" (v. 6).
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by Crystal Green

The Praise House

Stolen from their homeland, mercilessly stripped of their culture and language, and separated from their families—the enslaved Africans had limited joyful moments. On most plantations the enslaved Africans created Praise Houses as a place to enter God’s presence with joy, praise, and thanksgiving despite the deplorable conditions they faced every day. In the Praise Houses, there was exuberant and joyful praise to God as they petitioned Him to deliver them.

The Praise Houses gave the people hope and renewed expectation in their God. Many of them had been beaten, raped, dehumanized, and discriminated against all week. But the Praise Houses brought comfort to their physical and mental wounds. There they had the freedom to acknowledge through praise that God loved them and created them. Not only did the Negro spirituals (as the songs were called) celebrate God, the enslaved Africans coded the songs with camouflaged messages, strategies, and maps of escape from slavery. “Steal Away to Jesus,” “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot,” “Go Down Moses,” and “Wade in the Water” are a few of the spiritual songs they sang with coded messages.

The Praise Houses included praise that ascended to God, but God descended blessings upon His children.

Negro spirituals were songs to God celebrating spiritual freedom, as well as codes to physical freedom. Write a song to God our creator that will help you enter God’s presence with joy, praise, and thanksgiving.
