

## Celebrate Worship

Connections, Preparation, and Psalm 29

### Why Study the Psalms?

Today, faithful believers all over the world will open their Bibles to the psalms—and some will burst into song or prayer. They will sing with others or pray alone. The psalms speak when we are full of joy but also when unexpected circumstances block the sunshine.

Today in a hospital, at this very hour, someone is whispering into the ear of a dying loved one or a faithful friend,

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want... (Psalm 23 KJV)

Somewhere a woman is curled up in a large stuffed chair, tears staining her Bible as she reads,

I waited patiently for the Lord; He turned to me and heard my cry.  
He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;  
He set my foot upon a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.  
He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. (Psalm 40)

Are they tears of joy or tears of sorrow? They could be either.

Someone experiences forgiveness or sees their newborn for the first time, and the psalms give wings to their worship as they express their gratitude to God. Someone has just learned they have cancer or that someone they love has preceded them in death. And almost instinctively, as one who is drowning grasps for a lifeline, the Christian reaches for the psalms.

The psalms give us permission to express and process our emotions.

Psalms is a unique volume in the library of Scripture. In the other books there is more of *God speaking to man*, but in Psalms we mostly have *man speaking to God*. And man is here speaking to God under almost every possible condition and position, and *speaking acceptably*, thus showing us how we may speak acceptably to God under every condition and in every position of life. This is the crux of true and profitable devotional experience.<sup>1</sup>

The psalms were the song book of the Temple. David, Isaiah, and Jeremiah sang them. Military leaders in the Old Testament celebrated their victories with psalms. At Passover, Jesus sang psalms with his family and later with his disciples. Paul exhorted the Christians at Ephesus and Colossae “to teach and admonish one another...with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs...” (Colossians 3:16, Ephesians 5:19). When we pray or sing the psalms, we sense the oneness of the Church.

And the psalms will be the songbook of heaven. One day we will gather with the saints of the ages and sing psalms together as we praise our majestic God. What a glorious day that will be! What an incentive to study them, sing them, pray them, and love them.

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<sup>1</sup> Irving Jensen, *Psalms, A Self-Study Guide*, Chicago: Moody Press, 1968. p.14.

## Background Information

In the middle of your Bible is a song book. The psalms are lyrical poetry, full of imagery and figurative language. No other book besides Genesis has as many authors as the psalms. David wrote about half of the 150 songs. Other authors include Moses, Solomon, and some of the song leaders in the Temple.

They can be grouped into categories: songs of praise, lament, faith building, thanksgiving, and wisdom. Some are royal psalms because they celebrate earthly kings as well as the King of the Universe. Others are called imprecatory psalms. Their message is “Go get um, God,” pronouncing curses on one’s enemies—not very “Christian.” But God wants us to process even these kinds of emotions before we act inappropriately. Consider creating your own system to categorize each psalm so that you can access them later according to your need.

## Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study is to deepen your worship of Almighty God. What is worship? The term encompasses many aspects of the Christian life—singing, praying, and serving. In essence worship is responding to God because He alone is worthy. When we worship, we celebrate God’s character, works, and plans. We rejoice in our intimate relationship with Him. We participate in declaring His majesty and splendor.

Worship can be private or within a community. Some of us raise our hands, sway, and bellow with gusto. Others of us close our eyes, sit in contemplation, sing softly, or kneel. God recognizes and enjoys a variety of forms. However, true worship requires that our heart is engaged and our senses are focused on God.

Roadblocks to worship distance our hearts from God. What are typical roadblocks to worship? discouragement, fear, ignorance, a refusal to deal with sin, distractions, and harboring an unforgiving spirit. Women who worship God freely are hopeful and secure in their identity. They are not plagued by fear. They live productively each day, refusing to allow cares and trials to dissuade them from praising God. They understand redemption and the glorious future that awaits them. Each lesson in our study will tackle one of these roadblocks to help us overcome hindrances to authentic, unbridled worship.

## Our Purposes Today

The purposes for lesson one are three-fold: to connect as a community of faith, to prepare together, and to explore Psalm 29, an exemplary song of praise. Its important that you know one another before you take this journey together through the psalms. If you are already acquainted, choose the questions that will deepen your relationships.

### Connections

1. Introduce yourself. Include information about your background, family, hobbies, and affiliations.
2. Share a little about your spiritual background. Are you a Christian or here to investigate the claims of Christianity? Who or what has influenced you on your spiritual journey?
3. What is unique about you? Share something no one else in the group would guess about you.

## Preparation

1. Why are you interested in studying the psalms? Look over the *Why Study the Psalms* introductory section. Are you new to the psalms or are they an old friend? Have the psalms been meaningful in your life? If so, how?
2. As you read the section entitled *Background*, did you learn anything new or interesting about the psalms?
3. In the *Overview of the Study* section, the term worship was defined. Comment on the definition. Do you agree? Can you make any additions that would help the group understand the concept of worship more clearly?
4. Comment on statements related to the different forms of worship. What is your worship tradition? How are you most comfortable worshipping God?
5. Are you respectful of different ways others may worship God, or do they make you uncomfortable? Discuss.
6. Several roadblocks to worship are listed. Have any of these been roadblocks for you? Do you continue to struggle with any of these issues. If so, which ones? Share if you are comfortable.
7. What do you hope to gain in your study of the psalms? What are you anticipating as you gather with this group? Share any expectations or apprehension.

Psalm 29  
**Celebrate Worship**

**Read Psalm 29**

**Core One: Call to Worship** (verses 1 and 2)

1. As we worship the Lord, what should we be thinking about? Why is He, and He alone, worthy of our worship?

Summit

Verse 2 instructs us to *Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name* (NIV). How many different names can you recall for God? What do these different names reveal about the character of God? Why do you think God enjoys so many different names?

**Core Two: God's Glory in the Storms** (verses 3-9)

*This middle section of the psalm paints three pictures of places where God rules.*

1. What is the first picture? (verse 3) Describe the scene. What does God's voice sound like?
2. Have you ever been in a thunderstorm at sea? Seen a film depicting the power of raging waters? What can you add to the discussion to bring this picture alive?
3. What do you think is the author's main point in verses 4 and 7?

4. We find the second picture in verses 5-7, where the psalmist talks about two mountain ranges. They are Mt. Lebanon and Mt. Hermon (also known as *Sirion*) These mighty mountains to the north of Canaan rise to an altitude of ten thousand feet above sea level. Cedar trees on Mt. Lebanon were known for their enormous size. With these facts in mind, what do you learn about God's power from verse 5?
  
5. What does God do to the mountains in verse 6? How does this illustrate his glory and power?
  
6. The author has painted a picture of God's power over the sea and the land. Where else does God reign? What does His voice cause there?(verse 8)
  
7. What do you think the psalmist is saying with these three pictures?
  
8. Describe God's actions in verse 9a. What is the response of the people (9b)? What would be your response to this sight? Why do you think the people in the Temple respond the way they do?

**Core Three: God's Sovereign Care of His Own** (verses 10 and 11)

1. The author concludes the psalm with another picture that related to a past event. What is the event and what two things did God do there? (2 Peter 2:5)
  
2. What does the Almighty do for His beloved, even in the midst of the storms of life? (verse 11) Have you experienced these blessings in your own life? If so, please share. Why should we worship God with our whole heart and focus?