

Home Church Discussion Guide for Sunday, September 27

“Praise and Identity: Majesty of God and Glory of Mortals”

We are three weeks into a new study on the Book of Psalms. This week, we will begin looking at praise psalms. Mary points out that, although the Book of Psalms contains many different types of psalms (praise psalms, enthronement psalms, lament psalms, etc.), in the Hebrew Bible, the title for this compilation of psalms is “Book of Praises.” Even though the Book of Psalms contains many different types of psalms, the theme of praise permeates the book – even most of the lament psalms turn to praise!

Ask your group to consider how they might define the word “praise” in relationship to God. Mary offered this definition: “Praise is the offering of one’s whole self to God – it is as much about being as it is about doing.” In other words, who we are and what we do is linked. We often think of “praise” in the sense of corporate worship, but we are all called to praise God, both in public places of worship and in the quiet moments of our lives – to praise God is to live, and to live is to praise God.

Thinking back on psalms we’ve looked at over the past two weeks, ask your group to consider some reasons we might praise God from Psalm 1 and Psalm 2. In Psalm 1, we praise God because He faithfully leads us and gives us His law and instruction, His torah. In Psalm 2, we praise God because we recognize that He is sovereign and reigns over the universe. And our praise of God ought not to be attached to our circumstances; Mary referenced Job 1:20-21 as a reminder that believers are called to praise God in all circumstances. The Book of Psalms was carefully arranged; the last verse in the book, Psalm 150:6, says, “Let everything that has breathe praise the LORD.” This verse is a summation of the Book of Psalms. All of life should be an acknowledgement of God’s reign, and praise befits the believer regardless of circumstance.

This week, we will look at Psalm 100. Ask someone in our group to read Psalm 100 aloud, and then walk through the passage verse by verse, asking for commentary from the group on things that may have stood out to them from their reading and study.

- Verse 1: We are reminded in this verse that praise is meant to be the frame of mind for all of creation.
- Verse 2: We are called to worship, or serve, the Lord with gladness. Yet is this true of us? At the heart of our fallenness is our desire to serve ourselves, a self-love that keeps us from serving God. When we serve ourselves, we attempt to steal God’s glory. But the hope of the gospel is that, through the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, we might slowly turn from our selfish, self-seeking ways and turn to serve Him! Verse 2 also tells us to come into God’s presence with joyful song. Mary asked a helpful question for us to consider in our groups: what are the messages you are playing on a regular basis? What we put in permeates our minds, so what are you meditating on in these days? Are the things you are watching, seeing, or hearing bringing you to a place of praise and worship, or do they bring you to a place of self-serving and self-worship?

- Verse 3: We are called to know that the Lord is God, our maker. Mary contrasted surface knowledge with intimate knowledge, in the ways that the cats living in her backyard have a surface knowledge of her being the provider of their meals. Do we know God intimately, or are we merely satisfied with a surface knowledge of our Creator? Ask your group to consider how knowing God intimately might make an impact on our lives when we do face trials like Job faced. Mary pointed out that, if we do not understand and know God's character and heart, we will misinterpret all of life because we don't have an intimate knowledge of His sovereignty, love, and care for us.
- Verses 4 and 5: In these verses, we have a call to praise balanced with a reason for praise. Ask people in your group to identify the call to praise in verse 4, and the reason for praise in verse 5.

Concluding Discussion/Application Questions

- Which verses in Psalm 100 do you find encouraging? Which verses do you find convicting?
- At the end of the video, Mary gave the illustration of her daughter Mae needing help to climb stairs. She compared this to our need for community to stand around us, showing us what it means to praise in the midst of grief and difficulty. Have you experienced a friendship with someone who has been an example to you of steadfast praise and trust in the Lord, despite the adversity they may have faced in their lives? How has their example had an impact on your life? These types of relationships help us to remember that all of life is to be rendered as praise to God – they remind us of God's continual goodness in all seasons and help us to look forward to the good future God has for us.