

WORSHIPPING GOD

Leader pages on pp. 144-147

THE POINT:
WHEN WE WORSHIP
GOD TOGETHER, WE
EXPERIENCE JOY IN HIS
PRESENCE.

PSALMS 34:1-3, 8-10, 15-18

¹ I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise will always be on my lips.

² I will boast in the LORD;
the humble will hear and be glad.

³ Proclaim the LORD's greatness with me;
let us exalt his name together.

.....
⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good.

How happy is the person who takes refuge in him!

⁹ You who are his holy ones, fear the LORD,
for those who fear him lack nothing.

¹⁰ Young lions lack food and go hungry,
but those who seek the LORD
will not lack any good thing.

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¹⁵ The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their cry for help.

¹⁶ The face of the LORD is set
against those who do what is evil,
to remove all memory of them from the earth.

¹⁷ **The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.**

¹⁸ The LORD is near the brokenhearted;
he saves those crushed in spirit.

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MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Bless (v. 1)—David used this word to indicate giving honor to God for who He is and for all that He does to care for His people.

His name (v. 3)—In biblical times names were more than just titles and identifiers. They also pointed to the desired or actual character of a person.

The “eyes of the LORD . . .” (v. 15)—When biblical authors wrote about God, using physical images, such as “eyes” or “ears.” This is known as using anthropomorphic language.

Cry out (v. 17)—To *cry out* in the Hebrew literally means “to shriek.”

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF WORSHIPING GOD?

Maranda Curtis sings a song entitled, "Nobody Like You Lord." Some churches sing this song as part of praise and worship on Sunday mornings. In the recorded version of the song, toward the last part of the song the artist says, "Who wouldn't serve a God like this?"⁹ These lyrics speak to the magnificence of the Lord God Almighty, particularly His works and ways. Ms. Curtis's song highlights why Christians serve God the Father through Jesus Christ. He demonstrates that He is a healer, sustainer, and provider.

When you think about all of the tragedies that have happened in the world and how God has kept you; it's easy to say, "Who wouldn't serve a God like this?" He has healed many of us from illnesses that sometimes even the doctors were baffled. Their medical studies couldn't even explain it. Even as we hear testimonies like that; we can say, "Who wouldn't serve a God like this?" You see as we, a body of believers, come together on Sunday morning; we all have experienced the faithfulness of God. When you hear the testimonies of others and even think of how God has kept you; it is easy to say, "Who Wouldn't Serve a God Like That?" As we are experiencing the mercies of God through the week, the momentum has built up. It evokes us to worship our King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

How encouraging it is to corporately worship this amazing God! He is worthy to be praised!

Proclaim His Greatness //

Psalm 34:1-3

In 1983, famine ravaged Ethiopia, bringing hunger and poverty. Average Americans were largely unaware of the humanitarian crisis. Some music artists decided to do something about it, so they started "USA for Africa." A song was written, "We Are the World," and over forty big-name artists were invited to record it.

Why take such pains to gather several dozen artists for this song? It could have been a solo. But something extraordinary happened when this group ditched their egos and focused together on a cause bigger than themselves. Their united purpose became more important than any individual, and their combined voices more powerful than any soloist.

Worship is kind of that way. Something special happens when we come together in worship. Jesus promised to meet with us whenever we gather in His name (Matt. 18:19-20). Our collective cry of worship invites the Father to display His glory



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among us (2 Chron. 5:11-14; Acts 2:1-4). While many of David's psalms were deeply personal, Psalm 34 is an invitation for others to join him in praising God. This is categorized as a wisdom psalm and a psalm of praise. Written in the format of an acrostic, each verse begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in sequence. This literary technique helped worshipers memorize the song.

The note before the psalm references David "when he pretended to be insane in the presence of Abimelech." The name "Abimelech" was sometimes used as a dynastic designation, like Pharaoh or Caesar. This Abimelech was likely King Achish of Gath (1 Sam. 21:10-15), to whom David fled while running from Saul. When the servants of King Achish warned him about David's military victories, David grew "very afraid" (v. 12) of the king. For protection, David feigned insanity and escaped unscathed.

Psalm 34 praises God as deliverer. Because David viewed God as the source of his strength and protection, he praised the Lord "at all times" (v. 1). David's continual praise ("always on my lips") mirrors Paul's later admonition to: "Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in everything" (1 Thess. 5:16-18a).

In awe of God's greatness, David would "boast in the LORD." Boasting is foolish when we're bragging about ourselves. But it's totally appropriate when our boasting is about God. Scripture repeatedly tells God's people to make much of Him:

- "May those who love your name boast about you" (Ps. 5:11).
- "I will rejoice and boast about you; I will sing about your name, Most High" (Ps. 9:2).
- "We boast in God all day long; we will praise your name forever" (Ps. 44:8).
- "But you will rejoice in the LORD; you will boast in the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 41:16b).
- "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1:31b).

It's good to remind ourselves and each other that there is no one like our God. That's exactly what David advocated in Psalm 34:3 with the invitation: "Proclaim the LORD's greatness with me; let us exalt his name together." David had witnessed God's power and goodness in his own life. He couldn't keep silent about it. And like a spiritual cheerleader yelling through a megaphone, he urged God's followers to join him in raising the roof to rejoice in God's greatness.

HOW CAN BELIEVERS PRAISE GOD TOGETHER IN SETTINGS OTHER THAN A WORSHIP SERVICE?



DIGGING DEEPER IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM

Paul and Silas are great examples of what it means to praise God in the midst of your storm. They were tried, beaten, shackled, and placed in prison without just cause. These saints could have murmured, complained, fought back, or demanded justice. They also could have allowed anger and bitterness to distract them from their primary focus. What did they do? They decided to worship instead. They prayed and sang hymns to God. In response, God sent an earthquake which open the doors of the prison and it broke every prisoners chains, Paul and Silas along with the other prisoner stayed there. The jailer awoke and after assessing the situation asked the missionaries the question that saints should want every sinner say, "What must I do to be saved?"

When you are in the midst of your storm can God count on you to sing, pray, and worship His name?

Empowered by His Goodness //

Psalm 34:8-10

Those who have studied gratitude say it is the result of a two-step thought process. The first step is recognizing you've obtained a positive outcome. The second step is recognizing there's an external source for this positive outcome. David illustrated both steps in these verses. First, he claimed that by trusting God, he had obtained a positive outcome:

- He was happy (blessed, content, v. 8)
- He lacked nothing (v. 9)
- He would not lack any good thing (v. 10)

Second, David recognized his happiness and provision came from God. Implicit in his words is the notion that the blessings in David's life were not the result of his own doing. They came to him only because of his relationship to his heavenly Father.

Because he had experienced God's goodness himself, the psalmist invited others to "taste and see" the goodness of God for themselves. It's the endorsement of someone who has tried what he's recommending and stands behind it without reservation. Young lions, strong and self-sufficient as they may be, still lack the food they need at times. By contrast, those who trust in God can say, "The LORD is my shepherd; I have what I need" (Ps. 23:1). This shouldn't be taken as a categorical statement. We don't get everything we want, and some Christians live in poverty. But believers can attest to the myriad ways God meets our deepest needs as no one else can.



This is what we share when we come together as the church. Collectively, we express our gratitude for God's forgiveness and our salvation, for His provision, His love, His guidance, and more. As undeserving people on the receiving end of such profound generosity, it's the least we can do.

HOW HAS GOD BEEN A REFUGE IN YOUR LIFE?

Acknowledge His Provision //

Psalm 34:15-18

Scripture gives us a clear picture of God's provision for our salvation.

- Romans 5:6
- Acts 4:12
- John 3:16

Christianity is about recognizing our helplessness and our utter dependence on our Creator God. This is true with salvation, but it's also true for day-to-day living. We need God's wisdom, provision, strength, guidance, healing, correction, and love. True believers recognize and agree with Jesus's statement, "You can do nothing without me" (John 15:5) —because we can't!

In Psalm 34:15-18, the psalmist portrayed a loving Father, who continually listens for the cries of His children. He is attentive, concerned, and eager to help. New parents who bring a newborn home from the hospital sleep lightly at first, straining to hear the slightest whimper from their helpless baby. Even more vigilant, our Protector never sleeps (Ps. 121:4). His care is constant.

God responds to the righteous, the brokenhearted, and those who are crushed in spirit. You could say God has a special place in His heart for those who are broken and humble. David said as much in another of his psalms: "The sacrifice pleasing to God is a broken spirit. You will not despise a broken and humbled heart" (51:17). Jesus echoed this sentiment when He referred to the poor in spirit, the persecuted, those who mourn, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness as "blessed" (Matt. 5:3-10).

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If a humble dependence on God is the mark of every believer, it's also a characteristic of the church as a whole. Scripture repeatedly calls for God's people to repent of their collective sins and turn to Him (2 Chron. 7:14-15; Hosea 6:1-3). When an angel delivered Peter from prison, he went to a house where he found believers gathered together praying (Acts 12:6-16). In the days after Jesus's resurrection and ascension, His followers were "continually united in prayer" (Acts 1:14). It was to Christians united in prayer that the Holy Spirit came in power at Pentecost. And the explosion of growth in the early church happened in an environment where church members "devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).

Jesus Himself advocated private prayer (Matt. 6:5-6); He frequently went away alone to pray (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). But Jesus also taught us to petition God together with other believers: "Again, truly I tell you, if two of you on earth agree about any matter that you pray for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them" (Matt. 18:19-20). When we agree together in prayer, we honor God with our unity and draw strength from those who stand beside us shoulder to shoulder seeking God's help.

HOW CAN PRAYING ALONGSIDE OTHERS ENHANCE A BELIEVER'S PRAYER LIFE?

DID YOU KNOW?

We were created to worship. Since humanity's conception, God wanted His creatures to love and serve Him. The Apostle John states that, "But an hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and in truth, Yes, the Father wants such people to worship him. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in Spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). God wants His children to worship Him according to His parameters. Saints must uphold a high standard when it comes to worship. It must be sincere (spirit) and biblically based (truth). Sincerity without truth and truth without genuineness are both unacceptable. This is why Christians believe we must prepare for worship. We prepare our minds and heart through reading and meditating on the Word, confessing our sin, and praying. We also seek to participate in corporate prayer, giving, singing, and listening.

Biblical Truth: God is awesome. Worship and adoration are due His name.

When was the last time you prepared your heart and mind for corporate worship vs. just showing up?

LIVE IT

How will you respond to the biblical truths in the lesson?

When a group of people come together for a common goal, great and mighty things can happen. When a group of believers come together to worship the One true God, great and mighty things will happen! We were made to worship. God is great and worthy to be praised. We have all heard this being said. It is important that we worship God in spirit and in truth. How will you respond this week?

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- **Commit to Memory.** Memorize Isaiah 25:1 to remind you of our wonderful God. Share this verse with someone else to encourage them.
- **Commit to Prayer.** Write a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for all He has done for you. Pray this prayer this week to remind you of how great our God is.
- **Commit to Study.** Find a story or a psalm in the Bible of when someone praised God for something He did. Read it and compare it to your situation. Now pray a prayer of Thanksgiving.

DAILY READINGS

1. SEARCH ME, OH, GOD // PSALM 139:23-24;

God knows our heart's motives, its brokenness, and what robs us of the abundant life He died to give. He knows why we act the way we act, talk the way we talk, think the way we think, and live the way we live. So, with the search light of His Word, and His Spirit, He unearths what has been buried. It may scare us, but He is not shocked by what He sees. He runs to us with arms wide open; grace leads the way, and mercy follows. He offers healing and hope as we confess and repent. He will lead us "in the way everlasting."

The Lord is all we have, and so in Him we put our hope.

2. COME INTO HIS PRESENCE // PSALMS 95:2-11; HEBREWS 4:14-16

The tabernacle was the sacred place of worship for the Israelites and the Jews. It had three sections with the Holy of Holies being where the LORD's presence dwelled. Only the high priest could enter God's presence offering sacrifices for sin for both him and the people. In the Jewish tradition, the high priest would enter the Holy of Holies with a rope tied to his foot. The rope was to pull the high priest's body out in case he died while offering his sacrifices before the Holy God. Today, our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ has invited you and I into the presence of God through His blood. We have 24/7 access.

We enter not to offer sacrifices of bulls and lambs, but to offer praise.

3. LET THE REDEEMED SING // PSALM 96:1-2; ZEPHANIAH 3:17

The book of Psalms, the longest book in the Bible, is the Jewish hymnbook. These God songs, written by seven Psalmists, were sung to God, for God and about God in every kind of situation and circumstance we can imagine. Before a victorious battle, or after a deadly defeat. In corporate worship or in private suffering, we sing because

God sings. The Scripture says He rejoices over us with singing! Yes, the God of the universe sings over you. I often wonder what song He is singing and even pray I will hear His song. Because singing to God, for God and about God is our act of worship and praise. "Sing a new song to the LORD, let the whole earth sing to the LORD, bless his name; proclaim his salvation from day to day" (Ps. 96:1-2).

Worship is our adoration and praise our celebration of the Almighty God.

4. HEART OF WORSHIP // JOHN 4:21-24

Songwriter and worship-leader Matt Redman said, "The heart of worship is not music and song, but heads and hearts in joyful awe of the real Jesus."¹⁰ Since it's not the music and not the songs, what would happen if we stripped it all away? Literally. What if we cleared the stage of all the musical instruments and took all the microphones away? The praise team is led off the stage and every row in the choir loft emptied. Unplugged all the 9.6 feet x 6 feet LED screens, dismounting them from every wall—then turned the lights on. Would there be worship? Would worship flow from our hearts, where true worship should live? Or would we sit in awkward silence, waiting for the music to start.

From the depth of our hearts and fruit of our lips, we offer praise and thanksgiving.

5. WHAT CAN I GIVE? // PSALM 116:12-14

The Psalmist asks, "How can I repay the LORD for all the good he has done for me?" We have nothing of any inherent value to offer God. All we have is what He has already given us. The Psalmist then says he will lift the cup of salvation, a sacrifice of wine, and pour it on the altar while he called on the name of the LORD. Under the new covenant, Jesus is the final sacrifice. So, what can we give? We give it all. We give Him our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable (Rom. 12:1). All for His glory.

We pour out our lives as an act of worship for all God has done, is doing, and will do both in us and through us.