

LEADER GUIDE

SPECIAL FOCUS GIVE THANKS TO GOD

INTRODUCTION

Thanksgiving Day is acknowledged by many—both churched 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.

Writer Bio

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BEFORE YOU TEACH

Use Social Media

If used appropriately, social media can serve as an effective tool for your Bible study class. Set up a social media page for members of your class. Use it to share godly affirmations, ask questions, and to share thoughts about the sessions you are studying. The page can also be used for special announcements and recognitions.

Serve with Gratitude

The Thanksgiving season is the perfect time to show gratitude through serving. Discuss with group members what the needs in your community may be. Allow learners to seek opportunities and develop a plan for community service. Taking time to serve together will foster fellowship between believers and those in the community they serve.

LOOK BACK

Remind learners that last week's session was about trusting God even when your faith is tested. God proved Abraham's faith by testing him. It is a means God uses to reveal our faith and our ability to obey Him. Ask learners to share how they applied "Live It" (p. 81) this week.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

As learners enter the classroom invite them to write one thing about God for which they are thankful on the board or a tear sheet.

SAY: "During the thanksgiving season we usually focus on being thankful for the things that God has done for us." Explain that today's session will focus on the God who supplies all those things for which we should be thankful.

ASK: "When you live your life filled with thanksgiving, how does this attitude affect others?"

OBJECT LESSON: Use the Object Lesson (p. 154) to illustrate the effects of living thankful lives.

TRANSITION: Read **The Point: "Our thanks and worship belong to God"** and **The Question: "How can I express thanks to God?"** to transition into today's session. Note that the three Scripture points provide the answer to the question.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Serve Him Joyfully

// Psalm 100:1-2

GUIDE: Use the first two paragraphs on page 86 to discuss a typical Thanksgiving day and what it would be like if the events and food of Thanksgiving were taken away. Ask learners what they would do if this happened. Invite them to describe a lifestyle of thanksgiving. Read the third paragraph to discuss where our thanks should be focused.

READ: Invite a learner to read Psalm 100:1-2.

GUIDE: Use the commentary (p. 154), a Bible dictionary, and other resources to explain the purpose, setting, and context of Psalm 100. Explain that the psalm is for giving God thanks. It is referenced as a communal psalm—a psalm intended to be sung by a community of believers.

DISCUSS: Lead learners to discuss what they think the world would be like if all people in the world worshiped God with joy. Based on responses, discuss why it is so important to share our faith with others.

SUMMARIZE: Use the paragraph that begins "In this psalm ..." (pp. 86-87) to highlight verse one's command for all people to shout in praise to God.

EXPLAIN: Point out that the result of verse one should lead to the response in verse two. True service is worship. Verse two describes the motive of our service expressed with joy in the presence of God.

THE POINT: OUR THANKS AND WORSHIP BELONG TO GOD.

ASK: “What does it mean to you to serve the Lord with joy?”

DISCUSS: Explain these two verses are teaching three ways we are to give thanks. Invite three learners to read those three ways on pages 86-87. Be sure and discuss how “serve” means worship.

GUIDE: Remind learners that according to these verses, we should shout joyfully, serve God and serve His people, and come together to worship with fellow believers as ways to give thanks to God.

ASK: “Which of these three appeal to the way you give thanks to God? Explain your answer.”

Acknowledge Him Faithfully

// Psalm 100:3

READ: Invite a learner to read Psalm 100:3.

RECAP: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins “The next command ...” (p. 87) to discuss what it means to “acknowledge God.”

ASK: “Why it is important to know God and have an intimate relationship with Him?”

GUIDE: Remind learners that the three ways to thank God—“shout,” “serve” (worship), and “come” are followed by a declaration about the Lord. This tells us why we should thank Him. Use the commentary (pp. 154-155) to explain that God is our Creator and so we belong to Him. He is our Shepherd, so we are the sheep of His pasture. Thus, we benefit from His guidance, protection, and provision.

ASK: “How does knowing God as your Creator and Shepherd influence your thanks to Him? How can you reflect this in your life?”

DIGGING DEEPER: Invite a learner to read “Digging Deeper” (p. 87) to discuss the intention Sarah Hale had in encouraging President Lincoln to create a national day of giving thanks. Invite learners to respond to the question at the end.

GUIDE: Use the paragraph that begins “As we acknowledge ...” (p. 88) to remind learners that we should worship the Lord because He is our Creator and our Shepherd, and we belong to Him. It is a

privileged position to be His people. It is a position that should lead us to be thankful.

ASK: “How has God demonstrated that He is your Shepherd?”

Worship Him Gratefully

// Psalm 100: 4-5

DISCUSS: Remind learners this is the season that we celebrate Thanksgiving. Ask them, “which of the following three categories best describe your feelings about Thanksgiving: (1) The Receiver: can’t wait to eat all the delicious foods; (2) The Indifferent: It’s just another day; or (3) The Praiser: Thankful for God’s goodness and faithful love.” Once learners have made their decision, place them in groups according to their choice. Invite each group to discuss what “giving thanks to God” means to them. Allow time for responses, and note any differences and similarities between the groups.

READ: Invite a learner to read Psalm 100:4-5.

RECAP: Point out that the second part of the psalm is a call for believers to enter into corporate worship. Read the paragraph that begins “The psalmist continued with ...” (p. 88) to support this.

DISCUSS: Invite learners to identify the three specific traits of God found in verse five. Allow learners to share how God has been good, loving, and faithful to them. Use the commentary (p. 155) to explain that God’s goodness, love, and faithfulness motivates us to give thanks to Him and bless His name.

EMPHASIZE: Explain that verse five declares that God is absolutely good and that His love for us will never fail. His goodness and faithful love is for everyone for all generations. This promise is a river that will never run dry. This is a reason to give God thanks and praise!

ASK: “How different will Thanksgiving be for you this year after studying Psalm 100?”

CLOSE THE SESSION

DID YOU KNOW? Read “Did You Know?” (p. 89) and invite learners to discuss the question at the end on making thanksgiving a lifestyle.

SHARE: Point out that Thanksgiving is a special time to spend with family and eat amazing meals together. Thanksgiving is also a time when many forget its the real purpose. Encourage learners to never forget that God is the source of our thankfulness and our worship. Invite a learner to read aloud the “Live It” challenge on page 89.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for who He is and asking Him to teach us to live thankfully.

OBJECT LESSON

Download a picture of a ripple effect in water and display in front of the class. Invite learners to explain a ripple effect.

GUIDE: Explain that the ripple effect describes the power of a single drop when an object hits water. If a pebble is dropped in a pond, it ripples the surface to the outer edges. Not only does it impact the surface of the water, the rippling waves have energy to move things further down beneath the surface. Guide learners to discuss how thankfulness has the same effect. Share that when we have hearts filled with thankfulness, we become God-centered instead of self-centered. Thankfulness is contagious. People will be attracted to your contentment and joy. This will provide perfect opportunities to share who is the source of your thanksgiving.



COMMENTARY

PSALM 100:1-2

Verse 1. The Hebrew title for the Book of Psalms means “praises.” 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. In this psalm, the writer described the joy of corporate worship rather than an individual worship experience with God. He indicated throngs of people gathered for worship.

The writer exhorted worshipers to “shout triumphantly to the LORD!” Worship described here involved cries of victory and “joyful songs” (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). In worship 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. Our service begins as we worship together and continues as we live lives of daily service.

PSALM 100:3

Verse 3. We praise God for three major reasons. First, we “acknowledge” that Yahweh is God. To acknowledge that He is God is much more than merely giving intellectual assent. 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 (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. Thus we worship the Lord because He is the only God and there is none else.

Second, we recognize the reality that “He made us.” The Book of Genesis declares that God is the Creator of our world. 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. Since the Lord is our Creator, we are His. 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. The shepherd valued the well-being of the sheep before his own well-being. David told of battling a lion and a bear in order 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.

PSALM 100:4-5

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.

We not only “give thanks to Him,” but we “bless 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.

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 “faithful love” for His people. God proved faithful to His people in the Old Testament, and, indeed, the writer assured us He will remain faithful for all generations. 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.