

SESSION 13

sing to the Lord

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Psalm 147

BUILDUP THEME

INTERNALIZE GODLINESS

God commands us to sing praises to Him because He deserves it and it is good for us.

MEASURABLE RESPONSE

The students will determine ways to prepare their hearts to praise God.

MEMORY VERSE

"Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely" (Psalm 147:1).

- ☐ Read Psalm 147. What is your reaction to verse 1? Would you agree that your singing is pleasant and beautiful? Would anyone else believe it is?
- ☐ God wants to hear you sing His praises. God isn't conceited. He deserves our praise, and He knows that when we praise Him, our lives will be better aligned with His will. Living in God's will is the best life we could live. So, sing praises to God every chance you get!
- ☐ Encourage your students to add singing praises to God to their daily worship of God. And encourage them to be enthusiastic participants in your church's worship services.

Psalm 147 communicates God's desire for His people to sing praises to Him. He sees our singing as good, pleasant, and even beautiful. The psalm encourages us to sing of God's ways, works, words, and Word regardless of how well we can sing.

Session Starters

Option 1—Don't Stop Singing

Steps

1. Discuss singing to the Lord.

ASK: Ever start praising God in song before realizing someone is giving you a what-is-that-racket look? What did you do? (Q1)

ASK: What might God think if you abruptly stopped singing to Him? (Q2)

2. Transition to the Bible study.

God loves to be praised in song—no matter the quality of our voices and no matter what other people think. Psalm 147 makes it clear that we are to praise the Lord in song.

Option 2—Sing to the Lord

Steps

1. Discuss praise songs.

ASK: What are some of your favorite songs of praise to God?

ASK: If you could write a song of praise to God, what would you include in your song?

2. Transition to the Bible study.

God gave people like David a tremendous ability to sing. But that doesn't mean we should leave singing to the professionals. God wants all of us to sing to Him. Psalm 147 communicates God's desire for us to sing praises to His name.

Bible Study

I. Singing to God (Ps. 147:1)

God wants to hear our genuine, heartfelt songs of praise. The psalmist recognized this and began Psalm 147 with a call to praise God through song. In fact, he commanded it (147:7).

READ: Psalm 147:1.

The psalmist began his psalm by giving reasons why singing to the Lord is appropriate for all believers.

Singing to the Lord is "good." It is right, fitting, and beneficial. There is

nothing wrong with it, and it will do us good. So, even if we can't carry a tune in a bucket, we should sing anyway. God has given us the green light no matter what our singing voices are like!

ASK: In what ways is praising God "good" for a believer? (Q3)
Praising God takes the focus off us and our desires and puts it on God. It causes our hearts to swell with gratitude. It humbles us.

When we are singing songs of praise to God, we are less likely to gripe, complain, become depressed, and give up. Our focus is on the Lord, not on our problems. Praising God will help carry us through.

Second, praise is "pleasant." God delights in praise. He gets excited when He hears our personal words of praise. The infiniteness of God allows Him to give His full attention to the words of our songs. It's as if He is sitting and listening to a private concert by us. And He thoroughly enjoys our concerts every time.

ASK: How should the image of you delighting God with a private concert affect your praise to God? (Q4)

Third, praise is beautiful. Have you ever said, "That was beautiful" after hearing a song? That is the idea being conveyed by the psalmist. To God, all praise is like hearing a beautiful song. How encouraging to know that God enjoys our songs of praise and says, "That was beautiful!" every time we finish singing.

II. Singing of God's Ways (Ps. 147:2-11)

Verse 2 begins a long list of reasons to praise God that extends to the end of the psalm. The list needs to be seen as a short list. The psalm could go on and on if every reason to praise God were listed. As it is, we have plenty to think about in the psalm and to keep us busy praising God.

A. God cares for the humble (147:2-6)

READ: Psalm 147:2.

The psalmist began his list of reasons to sing praise to God by stating that the Lord builds up Jerusalem. Ever since David ascended to the throne of Israel, Jerusalem has been the focal city for the Jews. After the Exile, God sent leaders such as Ezra, Zerubbabel, and Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem both spiritually and structurally. During those years a remnant of the scattered Jews returned to the city and once again dwelt in the land.

In the Millennium God will again build up Jerusalem and establish the city as the focal point in the world. God's dealings with the Jews demonstrates His care and concern for outcasts as well as His grace and mercy to all of humanity.

READ: Psalm 147:3.

Verse 3 describes God's care for the brokenhearted. God is not like a doctor who fixes patients' bodies but couldn't care less about the troubles they are going through. God binds up their "wounds." "Wounds" is a reference to grief. God helps those whose hearts are troubled.

ASK: When did you have a doctor who really cared about you? What difference did his or her concern make in your life? (Q5)

READ: Psalm 147:4.

The psalmist moved from the depths of the hurting heart in verse 3 to the ends of the universe in verse 4. This abrupt change of subject might seem out of place. But God's concern for stars that no one can even see says a lot about His character. If God is interested in the stars and knows all about each one of them, then His care for people must be even greater.

READ: Psalm 147:5.

Verse 5 shifts the subject matter again. This time the focus is on God's power and understanding. The great power and infinite understanding of God might cause us to think of Him as unapproachable and aloft. But it is actually both God's great power and His unlimited understanding that should give us personal comfort. There is nothing that God is powerless to do for His own, and there is nothing about us that He doesn't understand.

ASK: How likely are we to praise God if we are continually focused on what frustrates and irritates us? (Q6) *We are much more likely to complain and wallow in self-pity.*

READ: Psalm 147:6.

The focus in verse 6 comes back down to earth and settles on the meek and humble. The humble recognize God as mighty in power and infinite in understanding. They understand the exalted position of the Lord. For such recognition, God lifts them up.

The wicked, on the other hand, refuse to submit to God. They see their way of living as the best. They want to be in charge of their own lives. Humility is foreign to them, and pride rules their lives. For this, God will cast them down to the ground (Prov. 3:34; James 4:6).

B. God provides for the helpless (147:7-9)

The psalmist interrupted his list of reasons to praise God with a couple of commands. He first told the reader to sing to the Lord with thanksgiving (147:7).

READ: Psalm 147:7.

The word for “sing” in this verse describes a response to someone or something. So, we are to respond to the Lord with a song of thanks. Verses 8 and 9 list reasons to sing thanks to God. They are general in nature and remind us that we don’t have to look very far to find a reason to thank God.

READ: Psalm 147:8, 9. **ASK:** What has God done for all people that should cause us to sing a song of thanks to Him? (Q7) *Given clouds and rain, made grass to grow, and fed the wild animals and birds.*

We often take God’s general blessings for granted. But when we stop to think about what God provides for us, we realize that we are absolutely helpless without Him. No one has ever developed a technology for creating enough rain to break a severe drought. Rain comes from God and is essential to survival. Rain is just one of God’s provisions for otherwise helpless humanity.

ASK: Which of God’s general blessing on humanity do you tend to take for granted? (Q8)

We might not think verse 9 is important. God feeds the animals—big deal. Yet God’s care for the animals is a testimony of God’s heart for the helpless. The psalmist gave the example of feeding “young ravens” that “cry.” We could say that a young raven is fed by its mother. But where does the mother bird get its hunting skills, supply of food, and strength? They all come from God.

Young ravens are rather unimportant and unpleasant animals. And still God hears their helpless cries for food, and He provides for them (cf. Job 38:41). This simple act ought to cause us to rejoice in song that we have a God Who provides for the helpless.

C. God delights in the hopeful (147:10, 11)

Imagine if God played favorites based on how strong or fast or tall a person is. What a sad state a weak, slow, short person would be in.

READ: Psalm 147:10, 11.

God doesn’t care much about how strong a person’s horse is or how powerful a person’s legs are (147:10). God delights in those who fear Him and hope in His steadfast love (mercy) (147:11). To fear God is to believe that God is all that He says He is. Those who fear God are awed by God and don’t waste their time and energy trying to awe God with who they are. Those who fear God understand that they deserve nothing but wrath from God and thereby learn to hope in God’s merciful kindness.

What should the truths of verses 10 and 11 cause us to do? Praise the Lord! We don't serve a God Who shows favorites. Every single person—regardless of abilities or accomplishments—who fears God and hopes in His mercy will bring satisfaction to God.

III. Singing of God's Works (Ps. 147:12–14)

The psalmist again interrupted his list of reasons to praise God with a command. This time he turned his attention directly to Jerusalem.

READ: Psalm 147:12–14.

God strengthened Jerusalem's defenses, blessed her residents, gave the surrounding areas peace, and blessed the fields with the "finest" of wheat. The book of Nehemiah records the resetting of the gates and the rebuilding of the walls in Jerusalem. Both of these jobs took a great deal of manpower.

READ: Psalm 147:12, 13; Nehemiah 6:16. **ASK:** What did Israel's enemies realize when the walls and gates of Jerusalem had finally been rebuilt? (Q9) *That God had done the work.*

The workers who tirelessly rebuilt the walls and gates of Jerusalem poured their lives into their work, but it was God Who received the recognition and praise for the completion of the job. On the surface that scenario might seem unfair. But when we realize that nobody does anything worth noting apart from God's guiding and enabling hand, then giving God the praise for work done by people makes perfect sense.

ASK: Why is giving God the praise for what happens in a church so important? (Q10) *If God isn't recognized for the work He does in a church, then we are giving the glory to ourselves and acting in pride. God won't continue to bless a prideful church.*

IV. Singing of God's Words (Ps. 147:15–18)

The last section of Psalm 147 deals with the praiseworthiness of God's words. When God gives a command, it happens immediately. There is no delay. Jesus' words while He was on earth demonstrated the immediate nature of God's words.

READ: Psalm 147:15; Matthew 8:3. **ASK:** Suppose Jesus had told the leper, "You should start to see some improvements in your leprosy in a few months. If not, I'll try again." How do you think the leper would have felt with such an unsure promise? (Q11) *Skeptical.*

The psalmist again mentioned the processes of weather. In verses 16–18 he attributed the control of weather systems to God's directing words.

READ: Psalm 147:16–18. **ASK:** What aspects of nature did the

psalmist say were under God's control? (Q12) *Snow, frost, hail-producing storms, temperature changes, wind, water currents.*

We get so accustomed to a godless explanation of the weather that we forget that nothing happens without God's directives. And it is easy for us to complain as if the meteorologist were responsible for a particularly hot day or a rained-out picnic.

ASK: What in nature has caused you to turn to God in praise? (Q13)

V. Singing of God's Word (Ps. 147:19, 20)

The psalmist returned to the focus on Israel in the last two verses of the psalm. The Old Testament was mainly written to or about "Jacob," a reference to the nation of Israel.

READ: Psalm 147:19, 20.

God gave the Israelites all His statutes and his judgments (rules) (147:19). Israel was extremely blessed to be chosen by God to receive His Word. No other nation could claim such a privilege (147:20).

Praise the Lord that God chose to give us His complete Word. Without God's revelation of Himself to humanity, we would be confused and on our way to eternal separation from God. Psalm 119 is almost entirely devoted to the praise of God's Word.

READ: Psalm 119:11, 28, 50, 99, 105. **ASK:** What benefits of God's Word are listed in these verses? (Q14) *Keeps us from sin; provides strength; comforts us in affliction; gives us understanding; guides us.*

Session Application

Gather

- Hymnbooks (optional).

Steps

1. Distribute hymnbooks to your learners or have them use their phones to look up praise songs online. Have them get into groups of four or five. Each group looks for a song or two that picks up on one of the themes in Psalm 147. Give each group time to briefly share their findings. (Q15)
2. If a worship service follows your class session, challenge your students to pay attention to the words and sing them as if they are personally standing before God without anyone else around.

3. Talk about preparing to worship God.

ASK: How can we prepare our hearts to worship God in song?
(Q16) *Confess any sin in our lives; read the songs ahead of time; think about the meaning of the songs ahead of time; focus on a passage like Psalm 147 for a few minutes; ask God to help us focus our minds on Him as we sing.*

4. Close by having students read more of the praise lyrics they found in their hymnbook or online search.

