



4

Praises to God

Key Theme

- God is worthy of our praise.

Key Passages

- Psalm 150 (Praise); Psalm 136 (Thanksgiving);
Psalm 43 (Lament)

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Give examples of different types of psalms.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 4

Write on the board, "If the psalms are poetry, why don't they rhyme?"

Students will place a bookmark at Psalms 43, 136, and 150.

Students will practice the memory verse by unscrambling words on the Memory Verse Review Sheet, then saying the verse aloud.



Studying God's Word

page 4

The book of Psalms is a collection of praises to our God. It gives us many, many reasons and ways to praise God, thank Him, and worship Him.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Read through Psalm 43, 136, 150, and others.



Activity: Psalm Concentration

page 8

Students will turn over, read, and try to match verses printed on cards from Psalms with verses that are from the same type of psalm—praise, thanksgiving, or lament.

- Print and cut apart one set of Psalm Concentration Cards with game directions from the Resource DVD-ROM. Print cards on cardstock if possible.



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

Psalms is a book of prayers and hymns meant to draw our attention from ourselves and to our mighty God. The beautiful poetic structure of the psalms allows their impact to be felt across the language barrier. Rather than the rhyming structure we are so familiar with in the West, these poems are written with structural elements that often occur in couplets that compare or contrast ideas. This is called parallelism since the ideas run parallel to one another.

One example of this occurs in Psalm 106, which is a psalm of thanksgiving. Verse 2 declares, “Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord?” This statement is followed by “Who can declare all His praise?” Notice that the same idea is repeated in the couplet. Another couplet can be observed in Psalm 106:4, where the psalmist is calling God to remember him. Psalm 106:5, 106:6, and 106:7 all illustrate triplets—the idea in each verse is restated three times. As you study the psalms, you will notice some of the parallels will be opposites of one another.

Through all of the poetic language, the psalms are meant to offer praise to God. The psalms teach us how to worship God with our words. The psalms made up the “hymnbook” for Jews. To the Jews, the title simply meant “praises,” and that is what the psalms were used for—songs of praise. Most of the psalms emphasize man’s position before the infallible, incomprehensible, holy God. This sets God in His rightful place—as Ruler over the affairs of the world and all mankind. As the psalmist speaks, God is exalted and His attributes are set before us like a magnificent banquet that we can feast on to feed our souls.

God’s sovereignty is constantly affirmed by the psalmists as they offer Him thanks and praise, as

they cry out to Him for help, or as they boldly claim their confidence in what He will do in the future. The psalms have been classified into various groupings, but the lesson today will look at three common types of psalms in three particular chapters: Psalm 150—singing praises, Psalm 136—giving thanks, and Psalm 43—lamenting or crying out for help.

Psalm 150 is the final psalm in the book of Psalms and ends a series of psalms dedicated to praising the sovereign creator God (Psalms 146–150). Psalm 150 shouts that all things should praise the Lord. It lists where to praise Him—in His sanctuary and in the firmament. This gives the impression that all of heaven (firmament) and earth (sanctuary) should praise the Lord. We praise Him for His mighty acts, for His excellent greatness, and with music, song, and dance (Psalm 150:2–4). The psalmist then declares that everything that has breath should praise the Lord! This is a fitting end to a book of songs and hymns to the almighty God. God’s honor and majesty have been presented throughout this book, and considering the wonder of who He is, we are moved to burst forth in praises to Him with the psalmist, who ends the Psalm, “Praise the Lord!”

Undoubtedly, Psalm 136 is a psalm of thanksgiving to God for His enduring mercy. This is made clear with the common refrain in verses 1, 2, 3, and 26—“Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” The psalmist rejoices at God’s care as he is reminded of God as Creator and as Deliverer of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt. In fact, the repeated refrain, “His mercy endures forever,” may have been spoken by the people in responsive worship. We, too, ought to give thanks to God for delivering us from our bondage to sin through Christ’s work on the Cross! For those who are in Christ, His mercy truly endures forever.

The Bible tells of men who praised and honored God with thanksgiving. But it is also an honest Book

that looks frankly at the hearts of men—through good and bad circumstances—and the emotions that are often revealed through these occasions. The psalms cover the entire range of human emotions, feelings, sentiments, and sensitivities. The mood of Psalm 43 is far different from that of Psalm 150 or Psalm 136. Chapter 43 is a psalm of lament—or crying out to God. In this psalm, the psalmist pleads to God for deliverance and seeks to understand the unjust situation he finds himself in. His plea is urgent and his heart seems to be desperate, but he does not lose sight of the fact that because God is his inheritance and his exceeding joy, his hope must rest in Him (Psalm 43:5).

As you teach the lesson this week, point to these different types of psalms as a way to show the students how to offer worship to God. Whether we are praising and thanking Him in the good times, recalling His faithfulness and mercy, or crying out to Him in times of anguish, He alone is always worthy of our praises.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

The psalms were originally organized into five books, but they have been assembled into one book today, often referred to as the Psalter. Many of the psalms include inscriptions that tell us who wrote the poem, who was to perform, when it was to be performed, what tune they were to be set to, and occasionally the circumstances under which it was written. Psalms is the longest book in the Bible—150 chapters—and some say the most diverse. As you read this book, you will see many different subjects discussed including God, war, sin and evil, judgment, worship, praise, repentance, and prophecies of the Christ.

Among the writers are Moses, David, Asaph, the sons of Korah, and Solomon. Some of the psalms have

been attributed to Ezra, even though he is not named as the writer. Although there were many human writers, we know that the ultimate author was the Holy Spirit. This is clearly affirmed by Peter when he spoke of the Spirit's role in guiding holy men to record these words (2 Peter 1:19–21).

In 2 Samuel 23:1, David is referred to as the “sweet psalmist of Israel.” Knowing that David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22), we can look to these writings as a model for our own worship of the Lord. They can be used to praise and thank God in times of personal devotion as well as to minister to the souls of others as you “let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16).

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Gracious Lord, I praise your name. Thank you for this study of Psalms. I am reminded that I have so much to praise you for. You are mighty and kind. You are sovereign and personal. You are my Redeemer. Thank you for who you are and what you've done. Give me the energy and passion I need to teach my students this lesson well. Help me to model good prayer habits using the Psalms as my guide. Thank you for the reminder that when we don't feel like praying because we're down, that's exactly when we need to come to you! To you be the glory!

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at Psalms 43, 136, and 150 with strips of paper.
- They will say the memory verse after they unscramble the words on the Memory Verse Review Sheet.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. Students should unscramble the letters of the missing words and then recite the verse to you or another student. Each week the verse will get harder to unscramble. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



Review

As we continue to walk through biblical history, we have spent a few weeks on one of the key figures of the Old Testament, King David. Today will be our last lesson on David, so we are really just touching the surface of what the Bible has to teach us from his life. I hope that you will take the time to fill in the gaps by reading the accounts of the rest of his life. Next week, we will be going on to learn about David's son Solomon and his succession to the throne.

- ? What are some of the things you learned from the lesson last week that you have been able to apply to yourself or teach to others? *Discuss various answers, focusing on the forgiveness that is available in Christ and the progression of sin discussed in last week's lesson.*

Our lesson today will take a look at the book of Psalms.

- ? Why would we be talking about the psalms at the end of our lessons on David? *David wrote most of the psalms. Second Samuel 23:1 calls David the "sweet psalmist of Israel."*



- Write on the board, "If the psalms are poetry, why don't they rhyme?"



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

- ? When you think of poetry, what characteristics are you looking for? *Most will suggest rhyme, pattern, and meter as the basic identifiers of poetry.*
- ? So if I said, "Roses are red, violets are blue," you would complete it with . . . ? *Some form of rhyming with red and blue in an A B A' B' form (e.g., My name is Fred, and I love you).*

While that is our typical Western understanding of poetry, Hebrew poetry is a bit different. You have likely heard the psalms in the Bible called poems, and you may have wondered why they don't rhyme. We will answer that question for you today.

Let's read the last psalm—Psalm 150—together. *Have several students read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What theme did you pick up in this psalm? *Praise God.*
- ? Do you notice anything about the structure of the psalm? *Each verse has two parts.*

This is the answer to our question. This pattern is the common mark of Hebrew poetry. This pattern is called parallelism and it comes in several different forms. Let's look at this a bit more closely in verse 1. There is a couplet in this verse—a pair of phrases that work together.

- ? In verse 1, in which places is God to be praised? *In the sanctuary and the firmament.*

Those two things make the couplet in this verse. In some cases, the ideas are meant to reinforce one another, and in other cases they are meant to contrast with one another.

- ? How are these phrases meant to be understood? *Since the sanctuary is on earth, it is likely pointing to the idea that God should be praised in heaven and earth—a contrasting couplet.*
- ? In verses 3 and 4, what do the couplets describe? *The couplets seek to expand the thought to include all different types of instruments and dance. These are all examples of how we can express worship to God.*
- ? Who was the author of this psalm? *While many psalms have an author in the introduction, this one does not indicate the author. Other psalms also indicate the occasion of writing and the melody or type of instrument to be used to accompany the psalm.*

Discover the Truth

The psalms were the original hymn book, if you will, for the Jews. The psalms were meant to be sung along with various instruments and on various occasions. This song, which is at the conclusion of the Psalter, another term for the book of Psalms, provides a wonderful way to offer praise to God in various ways (singing, dancing, playing music, etc.) for His many wonderful works.

Originally, there were five books in Psalms. Flip back to Psalm 107 and notice that there is a division there. Psalm 107 was the beginning of the original Book Five of the Psalter. You can find the beginning of the other four books at Psalm 1, 42, 73, and 90.

Throughout Psalms, God is offered praise and glorified for His many attributes. In general, we would classify Psalm 150 as a psalm of praise. Let's look at another psalm to see another type.



➤ Hebrew poetry is often marked by parallelism—couplets or triplets meant to reinforce or contrast an idea.

➤ The Psalter is another name for the book of Psalms.

➤ Psalm 150: A psalm of praise

Psalm 136

READ THE WORD

Let's read Psalm 136 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

MERCIFUL

Observe the Text

- ? What attribute of God is being praised here? *His mercy is the constant theme.*
- ? What is the general theme of verses 1–9? *The greatness of God above all—He is the Creator God.*
- ? What is the theme of verses 10–25? *These verses are filled with remembrance of how God had delivered Israel in many different instances: conquering kings and meeting their needs.*
- ? How does the psalm open and close? *Oh, give thanks to the Lord; Oh give thanks to the God of heaven.*
- ? What other attributes of God are represented by the thanksgiving in this psalm? *Eternal, infinite, omnipotent (working miracles), faithful, sovereign (God of gods), and others.*

Discover the Truth

We called Psalm 150 a psalm of praise. While this psalm may be called the same, we might also call it a psalm of thanksgiving. Now, there are no absolute guidelines on how to categorize the various psalms, but they can be broadly categorized in fairly obvious categories. We will look more at those categories in our activity. Let's look at one more type.



➤ Psalm 136: A psalm of thanksgiving

READ THE WORD

Now that we have looked at a psalm of praise and a psalm of thanksgiving, let's look at Psalm 43. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? What was the general emotional state of the psalmist when he wrote this? *He was distraught.*

Psalm 43

- ? **What types of questions was he asking?** *He was asking why God seems to be far from him while he is being oppressed by his enemies.*
- ? **Did the psalmist ever accuse God of doing wrong?** *No, he simply asked questions about his situation.*
- ? **Look at verse 5 again. What shift do you see taking place in that verse?** *While the psalmist was distraught, downcast, and disquieted, he reminded himself of the hope he has in God.*

Discover the Truth

We can call this type of psalm a psalm of lament. To lament means to cry out to the Lord. The psalmist presents a dire situation and asks God why there is such injustice in his circumstances. Rather than ending there, a turn happens at some point in the psalm toward the truth of God’s power, mercy, or deliverance even in the middle of the trial. Phrases like “hope in God” and “I will trust in You” characterize the turn that takes place in many psalms of lament.

► Psalm 43: A psalm of lament

The psalmist knows who God is and knows that he can trust in God, but the trial is still difficult. I am sure that we can all empathize with that feeling. But we need to let the truth about God drive our actions, rather than being dragged around by our feelings. “We should never doubt in times of darkness what we know to be true in the light.” *(This quote is variously attributed to Edith or Raymond Edman.)*

- ? **What other biblical character that we have talked about demonstrated this attitude (at least in the beginning)?** *Job acknowledged that both good and bad come from God, and he let truth guide him rather than his feelings. He did wind up doubting at several points, but he returned to trusting God in the end.*

In this type of psalm, we find a truly emotional response to circumstances followed by a turning to and a trust in God. Many of the psalms are very helpful for us in times of distress—turning to what we know about God and hoping in those truths that are revealed to us in Scripture. While we should be careful to not blame God or accuse Him of wrongdoing, we can express our confusion to Him and ask Him for justice and strength to endure the trial He has brought to us. He is faithful to answer that type of prayer.





Psalm Concentration

MATERIALS

- Psalm Concentration Card set

INSTRUCTIONS

Print and cut apart the Psalm Concentration Cards from the Resource DVD-ROM. If you have a large class, you may need two sets of cards. Place the cards face down on the floor or table. Students will try to match the cards according to the type of psalm printed on the cards—thanksgiving, praise, or lament. Each card has a different Psalm verse but will be from one of the three different types of psalms studied today. They will take turns reading and trying to match the cards.

We are going to play Psalm Concentration. These cards have verses on them. I want you to read the cards you turn over. If the verses are from the same type of psalm—thanksgiving, praise, lament—you keep the cards. You'll take turns around the table

reading the cards and trying to match them. The cards won't have the same verses on them. The match will be if the two cards are giving thanks, praise, or lament. *Play the game.*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

The book of Psalms is full of wonderful poems, songs, and prayers that men wrote to God. Some are happy—like the psalms of thanksgiving and praise. Some are not—like the psalms of lament. God wants us to come to Him in all circumstances. Whether we are praising Him, thanking Him, or crying out to Him in trouble. He is our ever present help in times of trouble, and in times of rejoicing. And it is good to give thanks and praise to Him for all He has done.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

The book of Psalms gives us an amazing view of our awesome God. Whether we are looking for comfort in a time of trouble or for high and glorious truths to offer to God in praise, we can find those things in the psalms. Amazingly, many of the psalms even point us to Jesus. Some are clearly Messianic (such as Psalm 22, which was quoted in part by Christ as He hung on the Cross). Others tell us of the pardoning of our sin (like Psalm 51) and should remind us that our sins are forgiven through Christ's work on the Cross.

Regardless of where we are in a trial or a time of ease, we can look to the psalms to remind us of who God is and what He has done for us. Meditating on or praying through the psalms would offer a meaningful time of worship, whether on your own or together with your family.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? What have you learned today about the psalms, and how will it help you understand them better? *Discuss various answers.*
- ? How do you use the psalms in your times of personal study or devotion? *Share ideas so that others can have fresh ways to incorporate the psalms into their devotional lives.*
- ? How does knowing that there are different types of psalms help us in reading and applying the ideas presented? *Knowing that there are different types of psalms allows us to apply those in different situations. If we are trying to help someone who is depressed, we can look for a psalm of lament to encourage him. If we want to use a psalm as a source of devotion, we can look for a psalm that offers thanksgiving.*
- ? If the psalms are poetry, do they still contain truth? *Absolutely! Just because something is put in a poetic form does not mean it is not true. In fact, there are many historical truths in the psalms and truths about the nature and character of God. The fact that these ideas are in both poetic and narrative form reinforces their truthfulness. The poetic form is also a memory device and can be helpful in memorizing these truths. For example, Psalm 119 is structured so that each passage begins with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet.*



MEMORY VERSE

2 Samuel 7:22 Therefore You are great, O Lord God. For there is none like You, nor is there any god besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for giving us the book of Psalms to learn more about Him.
- Praise God for all of His wondrous deeds.
- Ask God for wisdom in using the psalms to offer Him worship.

