

Unit II. Called to Praise God

“I Just Want to Celebrate”

DEVOTIONAL READING: Ephesians 5:15-20

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Psalms 147–150

PRINT PASSAGES: Psalms 149:1-5; 150:1-6

KEY VERSE

Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. (Psalm 150:6a, KJV)

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Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. (Psalm 150:6a, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do these things:

- Compare the reasons for and the expressions of praising God in both Psalms 149 and 150.
- Be spiritually inspired by various types of praise music and hymns.
- Praise God using the Psalms.

*Key Terms

Beautify (149:4)—Hebrew: *paar* (paw-ar’): to make beautiful; to glorify; “crowns” (NIV).

Everything (150:6)—Hebrew: *kol* (kole): the whole; all; “every thing” (KJV).

Firmament (150:1)—Hebrew: *raqia* (raw-kee’-ah): an extended surface, expanse; “mighty heavens” (NIV).

Humble (149:4)—Hebrew: *anav* (aw-nawv’): poor; afflicted; “meek” (KJV).

Joyful (149:2)—Hebrew: *gil* (gheel): full of pleasure and happiness; “glad” (NIV).

Praise (149:1)—Hebrew: *tehillah* (teh-hil-law’): an expression of honor, homage, or approval.

Sing (149:1)—Hebrew: *shir* (sheer): to make musical sounds with the mouth.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

Introduction

“I Just Want to Celebrate” is a song written in 1971 by Dino Fekaris and Nick Zesses and performed by the American rock band “Rare Earth.” The song, frequently



The Biblical Context

The last five psalms (146–150) have no subscript or Hebrew title; each one ends with “Hallelujah!” or “Praise the Lord!” While the rest of Psalms focuses on complaints, crises, or wickedness, these psalms focus on praise only, alternating between communal praises (see Psalms 146, 147, 149) and praises from creation as a whole (see Psalms 148, 150). Revelation 5:9; 14:3 picks up the theme of Psalm 149:1, calling believers to “sing a new song.” When we consider God’s daily mercies toward us (see Lamentations 3:22-23), our spirits should be bursting with a “new song” to our God. This final grouping of psalms anticipates God’s ultimate victory over evil. As we weigh these psalms in view of God’s omnipotent grace, mercy, and protection, we should take time to examine our personal worship and eagerly study the various ways in which the faithful have praised God throughout the ages.

covered by other bands, has a message of celebration and hope. The lyrics speak of the sorrow of being disappointed by people, seeing money fly away, and battling sorrow and hate. The song’s main message is that people should celebrate another day of living and refuse to let anything get them down or turn them around. The song calls listeners to live and hope for a better day, repeating the refrain, “I just want to celebrate.” While the catchy lyrics and upbeat tune seem to promote joy, it is a purposeless, self-focused joy. The song invokes a temporary, superficial feeling that will eventually leave the listener empty, distracted, or discouraged—the celebration for which it calls is not connected to any meaningful source or strength. The writer’s connection to life is fruitless without a connection to the source of genuine joy. There is nothing wrong with singing a light, happy tune, as long as you do not forget where to find a deeper, soul-satisfying experience of joy. Every recorded psalm of lament, praise, or thanksgiving ends by pointing to the true source of our joy, the purpose for our celebration, and the real reason to rejoice with instruments, singing, and dancing.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Sing with Joyful Instruments to the Music of God (Psalm 149:1-5)

KJV

PRAISE YE the LORD. *Sing* unto the LORD a new song, and his *praise* in the congregation of saints.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be *joyful* in their King.

3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will *beautify* the *meek* with salvation.

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

PRAISE THE LORD. *Sing to the LORD a new song, his **praise** in the assembly of his faithful people.*

2 Let Israel rejoice in their Maker; let the people of Zion be *glad* in their King.

3 Let them praise his name with dancing and make music to him with timbrel and harp.

4 For the LORD takes delight in his people; he *crowns* the *humble* with victory.

5 Let his faithful people rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds.

The psalmist immediately charges the congregation of worshippers to “Praise the LORD” (**verse 1a**). Within the charge is the exhortation to sing to the Lord a new song and offer praise to Him. **Verse 1** calls for a new song. God’s blessings are new. His mercies are new. Likewise, we should occasionally offer Him a new song—a new reason, understanding, or appreciation for what He has done. Private praise is wonderful, but the psalmist encourages praise in the community of the faithful. In the presence of likeminded believers, we can offer God a fuller, richer praise (**verse 1b**). The psalmist summons the congregation to celebrate God as both Creator and King (**verse 2**). We must see and recognize God as our maker and ruler before we can begin to fully grasp what we owe Him—submission, honor, obedience, and gratitude. The psalmist then challenges worshippers to give themselves fully to the worship experience. Instead of staid, silent reverence, the psalmist calls for something closer to a sacred party—dancing, singing, and playing musical instruments (**verse 3**)! While only the “timbrel and harp” are mentioned, they are symbolic of worship instruments and music in general. Praise God, says the psalmist, in a variety of expressions, with all you have—voice, body, and instruments. The psalmist further encourages worship by assuring that instead of ignoring or taking offense to such expressions, the Lord actually enjoys or “takes pleasure in” our praise, despite our flaws and weaknesses. While others despise and look down on the humble, God actually resists the proud and gives grace to the humble (see James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5). God honors the humble by making them beautiful (a radiant glow from the Lord) with salvation (**verse 4**), as they lift a joyful song from wherever they find themselves, whether at rest on their beds (**verse 5**), or at work or warfare (**verse 6**, part of the Background Scriptures). In other words, a joyful song is always in order. The psalm closes in verses 7-9 (part of the Background Scriptures) by confirming that those who praise God will witness His work among the nations. Those who continue to disobey will find vengeance instead of victory at the final judgment. Not even kings or nobles can escape the coming judgment.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Sometimes we sing old songs with new meaning and understanding. Sometimes we create our own song for the Lord. Which moments in life inspire you to sing your own song to the Lord?

Shout with Joyful Instruments to the Melody of God

(Psalm 150:1-6)

KJV

- PRAISE YE the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the *firmament* of his power.
2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.
3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.
4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.
5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.
6 Let *every thing* that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

NIV

- PRAISE THE LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his *mighty heavens*.
2 Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.
3 Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre,
4 praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe,
5 praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.
6 Let *everything* that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.

Psalm 150 opens with the familiar charge, “Praise the LORD” (**verse 1a**). The imperative is both specific and personal, as in “Praise the Lord, everybody.” God’s people should worship Him in every place—in usual spaces like the sanctuary, and in unexpected places, like the “firmament of His power” (**verse 1b**). Worship in the firmament refers to heavenly places, meaning that the faithful should worship in every season and situation—in warm sunshine and complete darkness, gentle rain and raging storms, sweltering heat and bitter cold. We also worship in the sanctuary—the spiritual space where one worships. **Verse 2** welcomes praise for every reason—for God’s being (His greatness) and works (His mighty acts). Everything that God is and does is excellent, surpassing our understanding. The psalmist closes with a call to praise God with every expression—that is, with instruments, motion, and vocal expressions (**verses 3-5**).

We praise the Lord wherever we are, however we can, with whatever we have, including the very breath (**verse 6**) we breathe. In short, our great and majestic God deserves our very best praise—a full, rich expression of worship that consumes our total being. This is a dramatic closure to a powerful psalm. Every singer, dancer, musician, and breathing child of God should join together, giving all their energy to the glorious praise of God.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What would it take to draw you into an expression of worship that reflects the psalmist's description?

A Closing Thought

This study unit challenged us to examine our worship. The psalmist's high call to personal and congregational worship should move us beyond selfish, worldly considerations and trivial distractions, to a moving encounter with God's presence. These closing psalms of the book of Psalms challenge the church to move away from dry, memorized worship routines, and replace them with fresh, vibrant expressions of praise for God. Be honest as you consider your worship: Is it restricted by what others might say or think? Is it heartfelt and sincere? Do you think it moves God?

Your Life

Think outside the box to consider new ways in which you can praise the Lord. Do not limit your experience to the sanctuary, but include new places and new expressions. Go ahead, make God's day.

Your World!

Think of new ways that you can engage others in praise to the Lord, sharing your faith through worship and acts of service.

Closing Prayer

Lord, we long to connect with You. Remove barriers that hinder us from worshipping You freely and sincerely. Help us to inspire and encourage others to give themselves to You with more energy and enthusiasm. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

While reading the Background Scripture, consider this thought: "Never leave before hearing the rest of the story."

Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, November 1	"May God's Ways Be Known"	(Psalm 67)
TUESDAY, November 2	"The Nations Flock to Mount Zion"	(Isaiah 2:1-5)
WEDNESDAY, November 3	"Make Disciples of All Nations"	(Matthew 28:16-20)
THURSDAY, November 4	"Gentiles Seek the Lord"	(Zechariah 8:18-23)
FRIDAY, November 5	"All the Nations Will Glorify God"	(Psalm 86:1-11)
SATURDAY, November 6	"God's Servants Are Sealed"	(Revelation 7:1-8)
SUNDAY, November 7	"Multitudes Praise God"	(Revelation 7:9-17)