

Explore and Exercise

1. We are called to boast about one thing—our magnificent and wondrous God. A great example of boasting about God’s saving power is the Jewish Hallel (translated: praise). The Hallel prayers are based on Psalms 113-118 and recited at important Jewish festivals.
 - a. Read Psalm 113.
 - i. What does this psalm model for us?
 - ii. In *The Message*, verse 2 says: Just to speak his name is praise! Just to remember God is a blessing—now and tomorrow and always. In today’s world, His name spoken more often as an expletive than as praise. How could we use His name in conversation as a form of praise rather than a reaction to shock or pain?
 - b. Psalm 114 gives historical background.
 - i. Why could history be important for believers?
 - ii. If you have personally experienced God-sightings, seen God’s hand at work in orchestrating your life, share your experiences with the class.
 - c. The psalmist shifts his attention from the past to the present in Psalm 115.
 - i. What reason does the Psalmist give for praise in the first few verses?
 - ii. In verses 1-8, the psalmist compares the true God to man-made things that we worship instead. What might the idols be that we worship today? If we made a list of things that are very important to us, how long would that list be? Where is our relationship with God on that list?
 - iii. Psalms 116, 117, and 118 weave the previous themes together.

- iv. Based on Psalm 116, describe the relationship between God and His people?
 - v. Enter Psalm 117 in the note section of your phone so you will always carry it with you. When troubles hit and you can't find the words to praise, read this psalm out loud.
 - vi. Psalm 118 is another over-arching psalm of praise. Memorize verse 1 so that you can repeat it in times of doubt to change your focus and flow your faith.
2. It has been said that God doesn't need our praise and worship; we need it because it transforms us! As we praise God, focusing on the truth of who He is and our relationship to Him, our sense of identity changes.
- a. Why are we called to praise God? What purpose does praise serve for us?
 - b. Praise can be expressed in thought, speaking, writing, or singing. In what way or situation do you most often praise God?
3. Name a daily habit that you practice. Is this an acquired mode of behavior (like brushing your teeth) or a personal preference to do things a certain way?
- a. What could be the value and advantages of wearing an identifiable uniform such as a nun's habit or a clerical collar?
 - b. Do you think it is important that all "praise habits" look alike or can their styles reflect your personal style preferences, such as classic, preppy, ethnic, chic, or eclectic? Discuss this with the class.
 - c. What "habit or uniform" do you wear that is visible to those you interact with? How important is it to you that people know that you believe in and praise God?
4. In the Hebrew language, the Bible includes seven expressions of praise:

- Raised hands (*yadâh*) • Raucously foolish (*hâlal*) • Kneeling in adoration (*bâarak*) • Musical worship and praise, sometimes linked with prophecy (*zâamar*) Spontaneous, non-scripted praise; often musical (*tehillâh*) • Loud shouting and celebration (*shâbach*)
 - Thanksgiving, confession, anticipating blessing (*tâwdôh*)
- a. Do any of the Hebrew praise expressions listed above take you out of your comfort zone? Can you identify the root cause of your unease?
 - b. Is there a praise expression (see above) that draws you to try it? If you praise God in a way that is not listed above, please share.
 - c. Have you ever engaged in crazy, rowdy, dancing cheers at a sporting event? If this kind of activity would make you uncomfortable in a praise and worship during a church service, explain why. How might *hâlal* praise be expressed in your church?
5. Share a time when your life script had an unexpected plot twist and your reaction to it. What difficulties (road blocks) did you meet in your desire to praise? What was the result?
6. **Praise Challenge:** All of us can use reminders during the day to remember the important things—like praising God. Choose a method that fits best for your personality and lifestyle. Here’s a few ideas:
- a. Sign up for daily scripture verses on your phone or in your inbox.
 - b. Carry a stone in your pocket to signify that “God is my fortress.”
 - c. Paint his label for you—Beloved, Chosen, Child of the King—on a stone or a shell and put it where you will see it every day.
 - d. Print God promises on 3X5 cards and tape them to the inside of your cupboard doors.

e. Use the graphic below (or design your own) as a bookmark.



When we **praise** the Lord in all circumstances
Our **faith** bursts into flame and burns within us,
So that we can **pray** to release God's power and authority
To **overcome evil** in Jesus' name
And **reign and rule with Christ** on earth and in heaven.