

Pursuing God

In Step with the Psalms

Lesson 6: Psalms 100 & 111

The Joy of God's Faithfulness

Stay on the Path ~

At the end of WWII, in a tiny town just outside of Paris, an American soldier drove to a bakery at the break of dawn. The foggy mist made visibility difficult, but the scent of fresh baked pastries wafting through the air was like a compass guiding the soldier on his mission. Pulling his jeep to a stop just outside the bake shop, the soldier saw a lone child peering in the window at the hot doughnuts being removed from the oven. Clad in warm coat and hat, his small hands and nose pressed against the glass made the soldier smile as he walked up to the door. Inserting his hands into his uniform pockets to pull out whatever loose change he had on him, he entered the shop and a few moments later emerged with a small bag of warm melt-in-your-mouth doughnuts and handed them to the small boy, whose eyes lit up as big as his smile. Turning to the soldier who was also smiling, the boy asked in wonder, "*Mister, are you God?*"

Simple acts of kindness done with gladness should be common among all Christians—they are the hallmark of the inner workings of grace. Yet how often do we live out our faith with a sense of *ought* rather than overflowing gratitude? We pray because Christians *ought* to pray. We serve others because we *ought* to be meeting their needs. We witness to our neighbors out of a sense of *duty* rather than joy. We pay our tithe with a sense of *obligation* rather than thanksgiving. We say that we love the Lord, but then we act like we've been doused in lemon juice! People see our attitudes and are put off, when it is our likeness to Christ that should draw them.

The evidence of true worship is gladness! Anything not done in true gladness of heart is not motivated by love. The best gift we can give to others is borne out of a sense of gratitude for what the Lord has done for us. Psalms 100 and 111 reveal the key to growing and serving with gladness which will in turn inspire and encourage others to do the same.

Did you know ~

"There is no other book in which there is recorded so many deliverances, nor one in which the evidences and experiences of the fatherly providence and solicitude which God exercises toward us are celebrated with such splendor of diction. . . . There is no other book in which we are more perfectly taught the right manner of praising God" (John Calvin; from the preface to his commentary on the Psalms).

Psalm 100

A Song of Praise for the Lord's Faithfulness to His People.
A Psalm of Thanksgiving.

1 Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!

2 Serve the Lord with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

3 Know that the Lord, He is God;

It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves;

We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

4 Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,

And into His courts with praise.

Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

5 For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting,

And His truth endures to all generations.

Psalm 111

Praise to God for His Faithfulness and Justice

1 Praise the Lord!

I will praise the Lord with my whole heart,

In the assembly of the upright and

in the congregation.

2 The works of the Lord are great,

Studied by all who have pleasure in them.

3 His work is honorable and glorious,

And His righteousness endures forever.

4 He has made His wonderful works to be remembered;

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.

5 He has given food to those who fear Him;

He will ever be mindful of His covenant.

6 He has declared to His people the power of His works,
In giving them the heritage of the nations.

7 The works of His hands are verity and justice;
All His precepts are sure.

8 They stand fast forever and ever,
And are done in truth and uprightness.

9 He has sent redemption to His people;
He has commanded His covenant forever:
Holy and awesome is His name.

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
A good understanding have all those
who do His commandments.
His praise endures forever.

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Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer.

Read Psalms 100 and 111.

Listen to the psalm ~ First impressions

What is the *tone* of these psalms? What stands out to you from your initial reading?

Compare and contrast a few of the similarities and differences you notice in these two psalms.

Put a psalm in your heart ~ (Memory verse) **Psalm 100:3**

(Write out the verse in the spaces below. Practice it each time you open your lesson.)

Know that the Lord, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves. We are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

Learn the lessons of the psalm ~

Selah (Think about):

Psalm 100 is one of the shortest in the Psalter, consisting of eighty-five words spanning five verses. Short in number but large in scope, this psalm once learned and applied can clarify our purpose as believers and change our attitude about the way we carry out our service to the Lord. It is a clear reminder that we are called to serve from a heart of gladness and not from our own efforts.

I. Believers should be growing in gladness ~

It is a high privilege to be able to approach God's presence, and He summons us to come at will—our will—anytime, anywhere, in any circumstance. Such freedom should be considered with reverence and a sense of awe in adoring worship. He is the reigning King of Kings and we are His subjects; as such we should enter His courts with praise!

1. What kind of response does the Lord deserve from His people as we approach Him?
vv. 1–2

This psalm is a declaration of praise to God not only from His people, but all the nations of the earth. God called His people Israel to introduce the Gentile nations to the true and living God.

2. What does the psalmist want us to know about our relationship with God? v. 3
 - a. How do the verses in Psalm 139 (vv.13–18) add to your understanding?
3. For what kinds of things should God's people be thankful? Are *you* appropriately grateful?
4. After everything in heaven and earth passes away, what remains that will endure forever? v. 5

The word *truth* (v. 5) comes from the Hebrew “amen”—a reference to God's faithfulness and trustworthiness. In other words, if God's Word dictates our behavior, we will reveal it in our worship of Him. Instead of imitating the world, we will imitate Christ and the world will witness the difference! *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire*” (Hebrews 12:28–29).

Touchpoint ~

Share your thoughts on how these two aspects of God's character—*mercy* and *truth*—affect your life here on earth and prepare you for eternity with Him.

Pause & ponder ~

Take a moment to notice and then list the numerous imperative verbs inserted as commands in this short psalm. What do these verbs convey to you about the atmosphere surrounding God's heavenly throne? How do they speak about your approach—your apprehension of who God is?

II. Believers should be worshipping and serving God with gladness ~

In Psalm 100, the psalmist has given us the best motive for gladness, which is worshipping God with an attitude of gratitude. But what happens when we don't *feel* glad? An attitude of *ingratitude* is often the result of unpleasant moods that creep unexpectedly into our hearts and minds and are allowed to linger, things such as dissatisfaction about what life has done or failed to do. Dwelling on these things, rather than on the words and works of God, prevents us from being what He has called us to be—channels of joy and hope to a desperate world. It is precisely at these times when we must fight our way through the mood and into gladness. We can begin by asking Him for a fresh experience of His grace and forgiveness. Why don't you do that right now?

Psalm 111 is a call to praise God for His almighty deeds, which flow out of His divine character. It is an exhortation to praise—an acrostic set in twenty-two lines, each line in succession beginning with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. It is believed to be written after God had returned His people to their land following their decades of captivity in Babylon.

1. Describe the psalmist's passion in verse 1. How will he praise the Lord?
2. Verses 2–9 reveal the motivation to praise the Lord based on His marvelous works. What does each of these verses say about His works? (Ponder them as you note them.)
 - a. v. 2:
 - b. v. 3:
 - c. v. 4:
 - d. v. 5:
 - e. v. 6:
 - f. v. 7:
 - g. v. 8:
 - h. v. 9:

God's works (v. 4) literally mean His *wonders (pala)*, referring to what is out of the ordinary: the soul-startling effects of His works on those who observe them. It speaks of dramatic divine intervention—the saving acts of God on behalf of His people. They are too awesome to be forgotten!

Touchpoint ~

Think of a time when God acted so dramatically on your behalf that it left a permanent impression on you for all time. Weren't you awestruck by what He did on your behalf? Briefly share the details below.

God remembered His covenant with His people; He brought them out of their captivity; He fed them in the wilderness; He defeated their enemies and brought them into their promised land. His works stand fast forever and ever because they are done in truth and uprightness (v. 8). They are never to be reversed; they are established for all time.

3. What is the prerequisite condition for praising God? v. 10

The wisest thing a person can do is praise the Lord! The awe inspiring apprehension of who He is and what He's done is the beginning point—the first principle of wisdom. A wholesome reverence for Him prompts our praise and our obedience. There should be no end to either.

Pause & ponder ~

The psalmist says in verse 10: *A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.* Beholding the works of God through the eyes of faith translates into true worship, which leads to service, and service done in the right motive becomes an act of worship toward God. Not only do we sing with our lips, we serve with our lives; both are received in heaven as sacrifices to the Lord. *Therefore, by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased* (Hebrews 13:15–16). Share your thoughts.

Live the psalm ~

What have you learned this week about developing an attitude of gratitude? How will this cause you to grow and serve God with gladness of heart?

Pray the psalm ~

Select a verse(s) from Psalms 100 or 111 that spoke to your heart, write it out below, and pray it back to the Lord with joy and thanksgiving.

“God wants worshippers before workers; indeed, the only acceptable workers are those who have learned the art of worship.”

A.W. Tozer

