

SESSION 6

Committed to His Worship



QUESTION 1:

When have you been swept up in a moment of excitement?

THE POINT

God deserves our worship and praise.

THE PASSAGE

Psalm 99:1-9

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

We have many reasons to love the fall season: the leaves change colors, the weather gets cooler, and football season arrives. Boys in small towns and big cities put on pads and helmets so that they can play a game that borders on sanctioned violence. Fans pack into stadiums to cheer for what has become the ultimate American pastime.

The people watching these games are called fans—a word that’s short for *fanatics*—and for good reason. Their behavior often borders on the fanatic. When their team scores, fans simultaneously shout at the top of their lungs—thousands of people joining their voices in a mighty roar of approval. As the fans scream and cheer for joy, they also jump to their feet, raising their hands in the air. Thousands of hands instantly reach for the sky as a symbol of both victory and sheer adulation.

We all grow excited and lose ourselves in rapturous joy at such times. Each of us has an innate desire to give adulation and praise to something we love—and nothing and no one deserves our worship and praise more than God.

Psalm 99:1-3

1 The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubims; let the earth be moved.

2 The LORD is great in Zion; and he is high above all the people.

3 Let them praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.

The innate desire to worship is in all of us for a very good reason: God put it there. In fact, God created us for the purpose of worshiping Him. Some have accused God of being self-centered for creating us to worship Him. However, instead of seeing God's command to worship Him as narcissistic, we should view it as the most loving thing He could ever do. Since God is truly the greatest, most holy, most loving Being in all the universe, then pointing us to Himself is the most loving thing He can do. We are drawn to worship, but to worship anyone or anything else is to worship a lesser god, and we would be missing out. God loves us and desires the absolute best for us—and that best is found only in the One who created us.

Where do we even begin in worshiping God? God's beauty is infinite; His majesty has no end. Once we are with Him in heaven, we will have eternity to discover and worship God for all His amazing attributes. But even now we can worship Him for what we know of Him.

We praise God for His holiness. Verse 3 ends with this summation: “[Thy name] is holy.” He is set apart and separate from all His creation, and no one is like Him. Verses 1-3 lead us to this declaration of God's holiness.

- ▶ God alone reigns. No one else reigns.
- ▶ God alone sits on His throne surrounded by His angelic attendants, the cherubim. No one else sits on that throne.
- ▶ God alone is exalted and lifted high. No one else comes close.

God deserves our praise because no one is above Him or even His equal. He stands apart in His holiness.

We praise God for His great power. The psalmist praised God for one aspect of His holiness: His power. No one is capable of doing what God can do—and His power has no limits. The Jews would acknowledge that “the LORD is great in Zion,” but he is not just a Jewish God or a regional God: “He is high above all the people.”

We see His power in the created world around us: in the massive stars in the galaxies above us and in the microscopic atomic particles we can’t even see. Only God could create those. Only God has the power to heal our wounded souls. Why should we praise God for His greatness and power? The answer is quite simple. God is powerful and we are not.

If this great and powerful God were against us, we would cower in horrified, paralyzing fear. Thankfully, the all-powerful holy “God [is] *for us*” (Rom. 8:31, emphasis added), not against us, so our response should be reverent awe and respect that draws us to love Him and praise Him. When we encounter God in all His holiness and glory, we worship. We worship because He created us to worship Him. And we worship because He is *worthy* of our worship.

We all have times when we feel powerless. A lost job, a rebellious child, a difficult marriage, or a work conflict can leave us feeling helpless to change our circumstances. It’s even in those times we should praise God who has the power to change anything. We can praise Him as the psalmist did: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth” (Ps. 121:1-2). We worship because we realize that, with our God, we are never without hope. He is more powerful than any circumstance or trial. And that ought to produce praise in us.

QUESTION 2:

When have you been awed by who God is or what He has done?

Psalm 99:4-5

4 The king's strength also loveth judgment; thou dost establish equity, thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob.

5 Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.

The psalmist disclosed other attributes of God that ought to motivate us to praise: His justice, fairness, and righteousness. We all value justice because we have all been on the receiving end of injustice. Unfortunately, this happens far too often in a fallen and sinful world. People are selfish, spiteful, and sometimes downright mean. And while it's not always intentional, fallen and sinful people often use the power given to them in ways that are hurtful toward others. We even face injustice when something is misunderstood and we're wrongfully blamed. And in this sinful world, many of us have been victims of injustice because of our gender, ethnicity, or political party.

In the face of injustice, let's remember the One who is never unjust. Even more so, God *loves* justice. Some may ask, "If God loves justice so much, why doesn't He step in and fix the injustice I'm facing?" In His righteousness, God will see that justice is served, but His justice is not always on our timetable. Certainly, when Christ returns and consummates His kingdom, He will deal with all injustice. As Peter wrote of the coming judgment and the day of the Lord, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward,

not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Lest we think God doesn’t understand the injustice we’re facing, remember Jesus experienced the greatest injustice ever committed. Jesus never committed a single sin, yet through an unjust arrest, trial, and crucifixion, He *became* our sin “that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21). He willingly bore our sin and shame, suffering unjust cruelty and punishment by the hands of wicked, unjust men, so that we could inherit eternal life through Him.

We can praise God because His justice and righteousness are now ours through Christ. Even as we face injustice, we can praise God and trust Him to work His justice. “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the LORD is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for him” (Isa. 30:18).

What should be our response to our justice-loving, justice-executing God? “Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy.” Even in the midst of injustice, in the middle of difficult circumstances in our lives, we can praise God and worship Him. Why? Because He is trustworthy, and He will always and inevitably make things right.

QUESTION 3:

How does our culture reflect God’s justice, fairness, and righteousness?

Psalm 99:6-9

6 Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name; they called upon the LORD, and he answered them.

7 He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them.

8 Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God: thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.
9 Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy.

DIGGING DEEPER

EXALT: A WORD STUDY

Psalm 99 belongs to a group of anonymous psalms known as Enthronement Psalms. The distinctive feature of these psalms is the Hebrew phrase *YHWH malak*, translated “the Lord reigns” or “the Lord is king.”

The command issued by the psalmist was derived from the Hebrew verb *rum*, translated “exalt.”

Translators of the Old Testament use the English word “exalt” 77 times to translate 8 Hebrew words. The 8 Hebrew words range in meaning from *to lift up* to *make high*, *to pile up*, *to be great*, *to ascend*, with over 50 English expressions being available to convey the varied meanings and usages of the Hebrew words. The Hebrew verb *rum* is translated “exalt” 43 times in its various grammatical forms.

James O. Newell, “Exalt: A Word Study,” *Biblical Illustrator*, Summer 2014, 55-57.

The psalmist gave us another reason we should be committed to worshiping God—He hears us and answers us. God, the wisest and most powerful Being in the entire universe, answers the cries of His people. Job was amazed at this: “What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?” (Job 7:17). God is the Creator and we are His creation. God is all-powerful and we are weak and frail. God is completely holy and we are flawed and sinful. Yet, despite all of this, when we cry out to God, He never tunes us out like a frazzled parent who has grown immune to the incessant wails of her infant. This all-powerful God chooses to answer us.

The psalmist used the examples of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, priests who called on the name of the Lord in their distress. When trials and tribulations came, they didn't shrink away in despair, but they did what all children do in times of trouble. They cried out to their father—"the LORD."

- ▶ When the Israelites complained because of a lack of water, Moses went to the Lord in prayer, and God miraculously provided (Ex. 17:1-7).
- ▶ When God was ready to wipe out the Israelites and start over, Moses interceded in prayer. God answered and pardoned the people. But because of the people's unfaithfulness, all of them who were twenty years old or older would die in the wilderness; they would not enter the promised land (Num. 14:11-38).
- ▶ Samuel prayed for the people on multiple occasions (1 Sam. 7:2-5; 8:6), and he concluded his years of service by saying, "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you" (12:23).

God answered them each time they called out to Him in faith. In the instances noted above, they prayed and interceded for the people in a time when they were being rebellious and failing to trust God. Yet, God answered because He was "a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions." What's amazing about this verse is that it doesn't say God avenged the wrongdoings done *against them*. It says He avenged *their* wrongdoings. To *avenge* means to "respond to a harm or wrongdoing." God avenged those sins—He responded to them—with forgiveness. Unlike fallen human beings, God doesn't avenge our wrongs with harm or anger; He avenges our wrong with love and forgiveness.

QUESTION 4:

How do the lives of those who've gone before us set an example for us to follow?

The awareness of God's response to us draws us right back into worship. "Exalt the LORD our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the LORD our God is holy." How could we respond any other way?

QUESTION 5:

What are some ways you've seen God answer prayer in our group?

ENGAGE

What are some practical ways for you to include worship in the following areas of your life? Write some ideas; then offer a prayer for strength and guidance in implementing them.

At work:

While driving:

During conversations:

When life gets quiet:

My Prayer:

LIVE IT OUT

How will you live out your commitment to God through worship and praise?

- ▶ **Evaluate.** Make a list of the things you focus on doing during the week and the ways you like to spend your time. Do an honest evaluation and determine if any of those things are objects of worship. Ask God to reveal your heart and lead you to make Him first in your worship.
- ▶ **Trust.** If you are currently in a situation marked by injustice, consider the ways you have responded and should respond. Lift the matter to God in prayer and trust Him to respond. Praise Him for His love and justice.
- ▶ **Worship.** Set aside a day or a half a day for extended worship—just you and God. Confess sin. Read Scripture to God as a form of worship. Focus on God’s character and all He has done for you. Let that focus lead you into worship and a closer walk with Christ.

