

TEACHING FOCUS:

PRAISE IS MORE THAN GETTING TOGETHER AND SINGING. PRAISE IS OFFERING ALL THAT WE ARE TO GOD.

PURPOSE:

STUDENTS SHOULD COME AWAY FROM THIS LESSON MOTIVATED TO LIVE COMPLETELY SOLD OUT TO CHRIST.

 **INTRODUCTION****Activity: "Highlights in Sports"**

Divide into groups no larger than six. Now number off, from 1 to 6, by shoe size, from the smallest to the largest. Ask each person, starting with #1 of each group, to share with the group their most memorable game of sports they ever watched. (Be sure to ask what happened when his or her team scored; what happened when their team won; how the fans responded to the team doing well).

The freedom to praise is something to be grateful for. Billions, not millions, billions of people in the world are not free to praise. Their government chooses their god for them or the government is their god. They face persecution for praising. We have a freedom in this country to praise the one true God without fear of persecution.

It is no accident that the longest book of the Bible is the book of Psalm - a songbook filled with 150 praise songs. We are going to look at two of those psalms (songs) today. These two songs will help us discover why praise is a privilege and why the freedom to praise should be a priority.

As Christians, we have heard about praise and why it is important. But today, let us reflect on the freedom to praise; that is, how praise should impact our lives.

 **Four Facts about Praise:****1. Who or what you praise is your choice.****Who will read Psalm 100:1-2 for us?**

*"Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs."
(Psalm 100:1-2)*

Illustration: Read this brief paragraph to the students.

"Where Am I?" People have arrived early. They have looked forward to this time all week - and now the day is finally here. People are smiling and happy. There is an excitement in the air. You can sense the anticipation as the time to begin gets closer. Where am I?

(Students may guess a football game or some other sporting event; movie; secular concert; store grand opening; etc.) Why wouldn't we guess church? Would church be different if this paragraph described it? (Read paragraph again)

The opportunity to gather and praise the God of the universe should excite us. There should be a sense of anticipation in the air that the same God who made us is the same God who desires to meet with us and “inhabit our praise.”

Word Study: “Shout” – doesn’t necessarily mean to yell at the top of your lungs. The Hebrew word literally means “to applaud someone with your voice.” It is someone who raises his or her voice – not to be noticed – but to lift up someone else and, in this case, to lift up God himself.

Illustration: If you are at a sporting event and a player scores, the fans “shout for joy to the player”; they applaud the player with their voice. They worship the player for what he or she did. At that moment the player is the highest priority and the center of attention.

Illustration: Who are some other people or what are some other things people worship? People or things that become the highest priority in their lives? Movie stars, pop stars, their car, their TV, money, their friends, girlfriend or boyfriend – themselves.

Players will let you down, people will let you down, pop stars will come and go. Choose to praise the One true God who will never let you down. Nobody can choose who you applaud or who you worship. You have the freedom to choose. You will choose one of two things. You will either praise God or you will praise something He created. You have the freedom to praise God.

2. You were designed to praise.

Who will read Psalm 100:3?

“Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.” (Psalm 100:3)

According to this verse, who shaped us and wired us the way we are? (Answer: It is God who made us and designed us with an internal desire to worship.)

Illustration: Praise is natural. When our team scores a touchdown, when our favorite band plays on stage, when we are within ten feet of the movie star of the month, no one has to tell us to cheer. No one has to say – hey – you might want to get excited.

You don’t have to think about clapping your hands, your brain doesn’t tell your legs to stand – it just happens – it’s natural.

Illustration: I went to a football game last month where over 80,000 people gathered to watch 22 men run around and knock each other down on a 100 yards of grass. It was fun and overwhelming to be a part of. I clapped and cheered, but as I looked around and looked inside of me, something was missing. Something deep inside all of us whispers. If we are honest, our soul isn’t satisfied when we praise a person and our heart longs for more than a few moments of excitement.

You and I were designed to praise. It comes natural to us. We will never be satisfied until we praise our Maker. God designed a vacuum that only he can fill. When we praise God, we connect with the only one who can fill that void and satisfy our deepest need.



3. God deserves all of our praise.

Who will read Psalm 100:4-5?

“Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.” (Psalm 100:4-5)

When you give your life to Jesus Christ and receive the free gift of salvation purchased for you on the cross, you experience first hand the love of God. God sent his one and only Son for you, so you could choose to live for Him.

Illustration: This is a true story. A mother had given her nine-year-old son piano lessons for a number of years and it was going nowhere. In desperation she bought two tickets to go hear the famous Patarouski (a guy who was incredible on the piano) in concert. They walked into the theater, sat down, and the mother became engaged in a conversation with the lady next to her. The little nine-year-old boy looked up on the stage and saw the massive ebony SteinWay Grand piano. The little boy slipped down the aisle, walked up on the stage and started playing chopsticks – CLINK, CLINK, CLINK, CLINK, CLINK, CLINK, CLINK, CLINK. The crowd was horrified – some stood up and shouted “STOP!” Patarouski heard the crowd and he walked out on the stage and told the boy, “Don’t quit.” He sat down beside him and started playing a masterful composition that he made up while they went along that went with chopsticks. And when they finished – the crowd stood in thunderous applause.

Think about all of the things God has done for you. When you consider the fact that God takes our meager efforts and mistakes (chopsticks) and by his goodness, love, and faithfulness orchestrates our lives into a masterpiece – you cannot help but praise Him. You are God’s masterpiece and He deserves your praise.

4. Praise is more than songs, it is surrender.

Who will read Psalm 101:1-5?

“I will sing of your love and justice; to you, O LORD, I will sing praise. I will be careful to lead a blameless life – when will you come to me? I will walk in my house with blameless heart. I will set before my eyes no vile thing. The deeds of faithless men I hate; they will not cling to me. Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil. Whoever slanders his neighbor in secret, him will I put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, him will I not endure.” (Psalm 101:1-5)

When you embrace the freedom to praise, you embrace the freedom to live a completely surrendered life to God.

Activity: Divide into groups once again. David makes several choices and commitments to God. What are they? (Find at least 5.)

Vs. 1 – **To sing of God’s love and praise Him.**

Vs. 2 – **To live a blameless life.** (How? By having a blameless heart. Where? Starting in his own house with the people who know him best.)

Vs. 3 – **To guard what his eyes look at.**
(To not watch or look at anything that hinders his relationship with God.)

Vs. 4 – **To guard who his friends are.**

Vs. 5 – **To not gossip or talk bad about people.**

David chose to praise God with his entire life, not just his voice. Will you choose to praise God with your life? Would you be willing to make these same commitments?

★ ★ ★ **CONCLUSION**

Illustration: One day some small children were being interviewed in their school by a radio announcer. He asked them the question, "What would you do if Jesus were here?" One child responded, "He is here." This child realized what we all ought to know. What David knew. God is always among us. Jesus is with us when we are singing praises to Him; He is with us when we are talking to our parents; He is with us when we are out on Friday night; He is with us when we think no one is watching. He knows our hearts. We have the freedom to surrender to his purpose and praise his name.

NOTE: The following page is a handout to give to your students to follow along during the session.



FREEDOM

INTRODUCTION

“Highlights in Sports”

1. Who or what you praise is _____ . (Psalm 100:1-2)

“Where Am I?”

“Shout for joy to the player”

“Highest Priority”

2. You were _____ . (Psalm 100:3)

“Praise is natural.”

“Something was missing.”

3. God deserves _____ . (Psalm 100:4-5)

“Chopsticks”

4. Praise is more than _____ , it is _____ . (Psalm 101:1-5)

“David’s Commitments”

How I can praise God with my life:

