

*** The Heights Baptist Church * Series: The Psalms ***
*** Topic: Praise God! * Psalm 95 * 9/14/25 ***

MAIN POINT

God's people are called to worship Him regularly.

INTRODUCTION

What are some areas of your life where you could use more discipline? (Possible responses may include eating, working out, spending money, using your time.)

What about worship? Do you associate a need for discipline with your worship of God?

Practicing the discipline of worship, both personal and corporate, is vital in our relationship with Christ. Just like we need discipline to eat well, spend less money, and use our time better, we also need discipline in our spiritual lives. God calls us to worship Him on a daily, ongoing basis. We are to worship God both on our own and by gathering together with other believers. Psalm 95 is a Psalm of praise. It teaches us that we are to worship God wholeheartedly, and it reminds us that He is worthy of all of our worship.

Note to study leader: Today's sermon is scheduled to be Psalm 100, which is a Psalm of praise. Since the goal of the sermon-based lessons is to compliment the sermon rather than duplicate it, and Psalm 100 is only five verses long, this lesson will be looking at Psalm 95, which is also a Psalm of praise.

UNDERSTANDING

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 95:1-5

While we live in this world, God doesn't force us to worship Him. What stands out to you in this call to worship Him?

In this present world, God does not force anyone to worship Him; instead, He invites us to worship Him. The psalmist expressed the freewill nature of worship by repeatedly using the words "let us". The Bible teaches us to worship God both publicly and privately. Both corporate and individual worship are vital to a close walk with the Lord. This psalm invites us to corporate worship, although its principles apply to private worship as well.

When you think about worshipping God on your own, what specific acts come to mind? How does that compare with the things you associate with corporate worship?

What value is there in participating in different means of worship?

One of the keys to God working effectively through His people was the believers' faithfulness in corporate worship (Acts 2:42-47). Believers who regularly meet together, hear and heed God's revealed truth, and serve the Lord make a united and fruitful church. Practicing the discipline of worship also means to worship privately, praising Him experiencing God speaking to you through His Word, and praying for His guidance and help in becoming who He wants you to be in His world.

What words and phrases did the psalmist use to describe God in verses 1-2?

The psalmist described God as "the LORD," a translation of the Hebrew name "Yahweh," the covenant name of God given to Moses. The covenant relationship between God and Israel stresses His loyal love and faithful care of those who trust and follow Him. By using this name, the psalmist not only praised God for who He is but also for what He has done and is doing for His people.

God is further described as the rock of our salvation. God is the One in whom our deliverance is secure. Scriptures often use the term “salvation” to refer to God’s deliverance from the hands of enemies. The term also can describe spiritual salvation. Through His Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord has provided the one and only Rock to whom we can look for salvation.

What quality of God is presented in verse 3?

More important than our ways of worship is the object of our worship. True worship focuses on the only One worthy of our worship. In an earthly throne room, the eyes of the people are on the king. The psalmist wove a musical tapestry of praise, portraying the nature of God and offering reasons we should worship Him. This God is the great King who is above all gods. Verse 3 does not offer biblical support for polytheism, the belief in many gods. The word “gods” is “elohim,” a generic name for “god” that is often used for the one true God. Here, it is a reference to the so-called gods worshiped by nations that surrounded Israel. The LORD is the supreme authority in the spiritual realm, regardless of the empty claims of those who worship idols.

What quality of God is presented in verses 4-5?

We also see a description in verses 4-5 of God as our creator. The depths of the earth are in His hand, meaning they are under His power and control. The highest mountain peaks are His. The sea is His because He made it. His hands formed the dry land. The extremes of the highest points of the land and the deepest crevices of the sea represent the whole world. We worship Him because He is the Creator of our world—He owns it all.

How should these descriptions of God fuel our worship of Him?

Why is thanksgiving an important part of our worship? What does it communicate to God?

One would not come before a king empty-handed but with a gift that indicated respect. The psalm calls on us to approach the throne of God with thanksgiving. The word literally pictures an extension of the hand, a way of publicly expressing our commitment as well as adoration. This verse portrays not a solitary figure but a congregation of worshipers praising God in gratitude.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 95:6-7

What styles of worship have been expressed in the first seven verses of this Psalm?

We see joyous celebration in verses 1-2 (joy, shouting, music), and in verses 6-7 we a more reverent, humble worship (bow down, kneel before Him).

How is God described in verses 6-7? How does remembering this aspect of God help us worship Him?

The Lord also is the supreme authority in the material realm. The One we worship not only created the earth, but also humanity. He is involved in the creation of each human being. The Lord said to Jeremiah, “I chose you before I formed you in the womb” (Jer. 1:5). We worship Him who is the Author of our physical life and, as the “Rock of our salvation,” He is the Author of our eternity.

What can you do to better focus on God during your corporate worship times? How about your times of private worship?

We need to quiet ourselves and focus on God as we praise Him.

A LESSON FROM ISRAEL'S HISTORY

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EXODUS 17:1-7

Meribah means “quarrel”, and Massah means “test”. In what ways was Israel quarrelling with God, and testing Him in this event?

Israel had just witnessed God bringing the plagues on Egypt and had just witnessed the parting of the Red Sea and the destruction of Egypt's army. God put them to the test. Had they learned anything about trust and obedience through these events? Instead of trusting and obeying, they chose to accuse Moses (and God) of bringing them into the wilderness to die. By making these accusations, they were in effect testing God, to see if He would remain faithful in spite of their rebellion against Him.

Israel foolishly put God to the test even though God had repeatedly demonstrated His faithfulness. And as a result, God disciplined Israel in the wilderness over the next 40 years.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PSALM 95:8-11

The psalmist is applying this event from Israel's past to the call to worship God in this Psalm. What three lessons are we to learn from this event?

1. Listen to God's voice
2. Don't harden your hearts
3. Don't test God

How would you summarize these three lessons?

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-5

In 1 Corinthians 11, we read that the rock that was struck in the wilderness is a picture of Christ. In what ways is this rock a good illustration of Christ?

The Israelites were in danger of thirsting to death physically. And without Christ, we are spiritually dead. Jesus was struck on the cross, and by his wounds we were healed. He gives us living water, which is the Holy Spirit (John 7:38-39).

APPLICATION

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:9-12

These verses in 1 Corinthians 10 refer to verses 8-11 of Psalm 95. What spiritual picture is being made by the fact the whole generation of Israel that hardened their hearts died in the wilderness?

The promised land can picture an intimate, fruitful walk with Christ. If we choose to harden our hearts against Him, we will squander our lives as Christians.

What attitudes or other distractions need to be eliminated so you can focus on God in your corporate or personal worship?

PRAYER

God, we praise you as our Creator and our God. You are the only one worthy of our worship. We pray that we will listen to you, soften our hearts toward you, and obediently trust you.

COMMENTARY

Psalm 95

95:1. “The rock of our salvation” is a metaphorical expression denoting security and safety. The Hebrew word for “rock” describes the steadfast character of God (18:1-2,31; 73:26; 92:15; 144:1; Dt 32:15; 2Sam 22:47; Isa 44:8).

95:3. “The Lord is a great God” is an expression prevalent in the psalms that celebrate the Lord’s kingship (47:3,7-8; 48:2-3; 96:4; 97:9; 136:2; 149:2).

95:4. God understands incomprehensible things such as the foundations of the earth (Jer 31:37), the depths of the ocean (Job 38:16), or the depth of GoHimself (Job 11:7). The power of God extends from the bottom of the sea to the mountain peaks.

95:5. The sea and the dry land belong to God because He created them. In Jonah 1:9 the same phrase is part of the prophet’s confessional statement about His identity.

95:6. The same God who created the world created humanity as well. Both the cosmos and humanity kneel before their Creator.

95:7. The Lord, who created the world, also created Israel. He serves a dual role as Creator and Shepherd in Isaiah 43:1,15. Those who truly belong to the Lord will hear His voice and respond to Him.

95:8. Verses 8-11 recall Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:2-13. The psalm bases its description here on the fact God was in a covenantal relationship with Israel. “Do not harden” warns against the self-reliance of God’s people, who followed their own counsel and complained in the wilderness. The names Meribah (lit “contention, controversy”) and Massah (“test”) were given by Moses to the location where God provided water from a rock after the people tested God (Ex 17:7; Num 20:13; Dt 6:16).

95:9. The Lord tested Israel’s faithfulness in the wilderness (Dt 8:2; 33:8). The Hebrew word for “tested” describes the refining of precious metals by smelting (Zech 13:9). Israel foolishly put God to the test even though God had repeatedly demonstrated His faithfulness. And as a result, God tested Israel in the wilderness over the next 40 years.

95:10. Although the original group that departed Egypt would not enter Canaan because of their sinfulness, Caleb and Joshua would lead the next generation into the promised land (Num 14:30).

95:11. A person may rest at home or rest through relief from enemies. God rested on the Sabbath (Gen 2:2) and rests among His people (2Ch 6:41-42). The concept of rest reaches its full development in Heb 4:3-11.