



GRATITUDE

**LIFE GROUPS
STUDY GUIDE
NOVEMBER 7-21, 2021**

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

FW

Gratitude

November 7

21

GRATITUDE FOR THE WIN

STUDY GUIDE

PSALM 30

NOVEMBER 7, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: GOD WANTS TO USE YOUR HELPLESSNESS TO LEAD YOU TO A PLACE OF GRATEFUL FAITH IN HIS SAVING POWER.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: IN SEASONS OF DIFFICULTY AND DISAPPOINTMENT, WE ARE PRONE TO FEEL HELPLESS AND DEFEATED. GOD WANTS TO USE THOSE SEASONS TO SHOW US HE IS OUR EVER-PRESENT HELP AND REASON FOR GRATITUDE.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: WHEN WE CONFESS OUR SINS, JESUS IS FAITHFUL TO FORGIVE US AND CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS (1 JOHN 1:9).

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Recall movies, books, or TV shows where the bad guy wins in the end (for example, *Braveheart*). Why do we feel good when the good guys win or the bad guys “get what’s coming to them” in a movie or TV show? How do we feel if the bad guys win? Why do we find this so disagreeable?
- 2 Have you ever felt like an underdog, like a “good guy” who can’t seem to “win”?
- 3 What is your attitude about life this Thanksgiving season (defeated, hopeful, determined to work harder, trusting in God to work everything out in the end, etc.)?

All of us have felt like the underdog at some point in our lives, whether we’re in that place because of our own wrongdoing or because life came at us hard. Often, we think if we just work harder, good things will come our way. But if we look at the world on a macro level, we see this is not always the case. There are many humble people who work hard and struggle to find victory in the way the world defines it. Clearly, the answer isn’t simply to work harder. There must be another way.

In Psalm 30, David praised God for giving him the “win” when it looked like he would lose. He had sinned against God, but God was his security. By trusting in God, David found victory and was eternally grateful for it. This Thanksgiving season, and in every season, we can be grateful to God for picking us up from our low position and giving us the eternal “win” in Jesus Christ.

UNDERSTANDING

This psalm is a “song” of thanksgiving written by David on the occasion of the dedication of the temple, and focuses on God’s loving correction in David’s life for his sin of self-sufficiency. David was grateful to have a new start with the Lord. His season of difficulty, disappointment, and defeat was restored with rejoicing, dancing, and singing.

> READ PSALM 30:1-5.

- What reasons did David have for previously feeling like he was an underdog?

David had enemies who had seemed to be triumphing over him. He also had some kind of physical sickness that either was a near death experience or, at the very least, made David feel that way. Either way, he endured a season when he was weak, tired, and desperate.

- How did David’s feelings of helplessness end up being a good thing in his life?

- What had David learned about God through this experience?

David’s desperation led him to cry out to God for help. He couldn’t do anything about his situation, but he knew Someone who could. David found God trustworthy. This experience led David’s gratitude to grow. Resolved to rejoice in the Lord after He had delivered him from the depths of the pit, David praised God and shared testimony—here in song—inviting others to praise Him too.

- Which of these truths about God that David described stand out to you the most in this season of your life? Explain.
- When in your life has a season of defeat or helplessness resulted in spiritual growth? What happened? What did you learn about God through that experience?

We are all helpless, especially in regard to our sinful condition. And many of us don't like to acknowledge that truth. We try to insulate ourselves against feeling helpless by medicating ourselves with hard work, entertainment, and other forms of distraction.

- What kinds of things must we believe are true about God and His character to humbly acknowledge our helplessness before Him?

When we humbly come before God in repentance, we acknowledge that He is powerful and we are not. We confess that He has control when we have none. We are reminded that He loves us even though we are sinful, and we trust that He is willing and able to help us.

> READ PSALM 30:6-12.

- What reasons did David have for previously feeling like he wasn't an underdog, but a "sure thing" never to be shaken?
- Why is it tempting to think of ourselves as self-sufficient and secure? What are some things we pursue in life to feel that way?
- Why would God allow David's life to take such a terrible turn (v. 7)? Doesn't He want us to feel secure? Explain.
- What's the difference between the security of verse 6 and verse 7?

God disciplined David for his sin of self-sufficiency and self-centered independence from the Lord. God removed His presence from David because of his sin.

We can talk ourselves into almost anything, just like David had. We can think that because we have a house, health insurance, healthy kids, and wear our seatbelts, we are secure. Yet, circumstances can come to any of us and wreck that security. But this isn't a bad thing because God uses it to show us where true security lies. He allows us to fail so we can grow in our trust and gratitude for Him who never fails.

- How did David respond to being “shattered”?

- How could he have responded instead?

- In your own words, what reasons did David have to say he would give thanks to God forever?

- What reasons do you have to give thanks to God forever?

Having pleaded his case in repentance, David received the forgiveness of God that turned his sadness into shouts of joy. He recognized the clear evidence of the Father's love acting for his good. God wanted David, and He wants us, to recognize our status as underdogs, unable to secure victory apart from Him. He disciplines us to turn our hearts to Him in obedience to His instructions. When we confess our sins, weeping may last for the night, but joy comes in the morning.

- At first glance, it might seem strange that Psalm 30 was written for the dedication of the temple. Read Psalm 18:6 and 1 Corinthians 3:16. Why were David's words here appropriate for the dedication of God's temple?

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

- In what areas of your life are you tempted to rely on circumstances as your source for gratitude?
- How does Psalm 30 challenge you in that this Thanksgiving season?
- What has to happen in a person's life for verse 1 to be true for them? Who in your life needs to hear that?

PRAY

Thank God for rescuing you from the sin that triumphed over you. Praise Him for hearing your cry for help and bringing you up from the grave. Ask Him to give you opportunities this week to give testimony about that, like David did, so others might learn to praise God too.

PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

FW

Gratitude

NOVEMBER 14

21

GIVE THANKS TO THE LORD

STUDY GUIDE

PSALM 107

NOVEMBER 14, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: WE DO NOT PRAISE GOD TO GET WHAT WE WANT FROM HIM, BUT RATHER TO ACKNOWLEDGE HIS GOODNESS, SUBMIT TO HIS WILL, AND RELY ON HIS STRENGTH.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: GRATITUDE IS A GIFT FROM GOD GIVEN TO HELP US GROW IN INTIMACY WITH HIM.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS HAS RECONCILED US TO THE FATHER AND IS OUR ULTIMATE REASON FOR GRATITUDE.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Share about a time when you had to ask for help in completing a task or solving a problem.
- 2 Is it difficult for you to ask for help from others? Why or why not?

We live in a culture that values self-sufficiency. We like to think that we can solve any problem and accomplish any task through our own strength, wisdom, and power. Life has a way of proving such notions wrong as we face problems or tasks that we cannot solve on our own. Our truly deep need can either drive us to despair or drive us to God. Thankfully, when we acknowledge our need and come to God desperately seeking His grace, we will find Him ready to help us in our need.

UNDERSTANDING

> READ PSALM 107:1-3.

Psalm 107 was probably written shortly after the Israelites were allowed to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the city and the temple after the Babylonian exile. The Psalm begins with a call to Israel to give thanks to the Lord for the salvation He provided them before citing four unique dire situations from which God redeemed them.

- What attribute of the Lord did the psalmist command his readers to give thanks for? How might forgetting this attribute of God keep us from being thankful?
- What keeps you from being thankful to God? What are some practical ways we might cultivate thankfulness in our hearts toward God?

> READ PSALM 107:4-32.

- Look at verses 4-5, 10-11, 17-18, and 23-27. What four situations did the psalmist recount? What do each of these situations have in common?
- Why did God allow these people to face such dire situations? Why might God allow us to face similarly difficult circumstances?

In each of the four situations the Psalmist recounted feeling hopeless. The people were completely lost (vv. 4-5), imprisoned (vv. 10-11), deathly ill (vv. 17-18), and surrounded by a deadly storm (vv. 23-27). God allows us to face dire circumstances so we might come to the end of ourselves and realize He is our only hope. It is only when we realize we cannot save ourselves that we turn to the only One Who has the power to truly save.

- How did the people's sin contribute to their affliction (vv. 11, 17)? Why is it sometimes difficult for us to admit that our sinful actions have contributed the afflictions we face?
- Who "bowed" the people's hearts with labor (v. 12)? Who was the source of the great storm that caused the sailors distress (v. 24)? What was God hoping to accomplish in the hearts of the people?

In both instances, the people were guilty of rebelling against the Lord (vv. 11, 17). God showed them kindness by confronting them with earthly consequences for their sins. In so doing, He was moving them to repentance that would have an eternal impact in their lives. While not all the affliction we face is due to our own sin, any time we face affliction, we should pause to consider whether there is sin in our hearts that is keeping us from delighting in God.

- How did the people respond (vv. 6, 13, 19, 28)? What does their response tell us about their understanding of their predicament? What does it tell us about their faith in God?

- What does the people's desperate cry for mercy tell us about their faith in God? How might crying out to God in desperation show Him honor?

In verses 6, 13, 19, and 28, the people's response to their affliction was the same—they cried out to God for mercy. This demonstrated that they understood their spiritual bankruptcy and their inability to save themselves. We honor God when cry out to Him in desperation because such prayers demonstrate that we believe God can save us and that He is our only hope.

- How did God respond to each of the four groups of people who cry out to Him for mercy (vv. 6-7, 13-14, 19-20, 28-29)? What has God delivered you from?
- How did the psalmist encourage each of these people to respond to the deliverance God provides (vv. 8-9, 15-16, 21-22, 28-29)? How should we respond to the deliverance God has provided in our lives?

> READ PSALM 107:39-43 AND LUKE 18:39-43.

- Based on these two passages, what makes the needy (v. 41) more likely to receive God's grace than princes (v. 40)? What made the tax collector in Luke 18 better positioned to be justified before God than the Pharisee?
- The psalmist ended Psalm 107 with a challenge to "ponder the loving deeds of the Lord" (v. 43). How has God demonstrated His steadfast love for us through Christ's sacrifice on the cross?

The needy, like the tax collector, realized that their only hope of salvation is that God would show them grace. They knew that they had done nothing to deserve God's favor and they admit their need for God and cry out to Him for help. Both the needy in Psalm 107 and the tax collector in Luke 18 give us a picture of what it means to cry out to God for eternal salvation. Following Christ

requires that we repent of any notion that we can fix ourselves spiritually and work our way toward God through our own efforts. We must acknowledge our dire circumstances and our desperate spiritual condition and look to Christ who died on the cross for our sins. By looking to the cross, we will be reminded that God's love is free and endures forever!

APPLICATION

- Would you describe your prayers to God as desperate? What might need to change for your prayer life to align with the heart of those who cried out to God for mercy in Psalm 107?
- How might we guard against praying pridefully like the Pharisee in Luke 18:11? How might you cultivate a heart of humility before God when you pray this week?
- What are some practical steps you might take to be more mindful of God's steadfast love for you?

PRAY

Thank God for demonstrating His steadfast love for us through the cross of Jesus Christ. Pray that we would be mindful of our desperate sinful condition before Him and that we would cry out to Him for mercy as we become more aware of the sin in our lives. Pray that God would help us repent from the pride that is keeping us from a deeper relationship with Him and cultivate a more humble and dependent faith in Him.

LIFE GROUPS	PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE	
	FW	<i>Gratitude</i>
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GRATITUDE IN OUR GRIEF

STUDY GUIDE

PSALM 11

NOVEMBER 21, 2021

HIGHLIGHTS

TAKEAWAY: WE ALL GO THROUGH SEASONS OF GRIEF, BUT WE CAN EMBRACE THEM BECAUSE GOD IS EMBRACING US.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT: WE WILL HAVE GRIEF IN OUR LIVES, BUT GOD IS WITH US IN EVERY SEASON.

GOSPEL CONNECTION: JESUS FACED THE ULTIMATE GRIEF SO THAT WE MIGHT FIND JOY IN HIM.

INTRODUCTION

- 1 What has been a difficult loss or change you have experienced lately? How would you describe your conflicting feelings in that situation?
- 2 How do you typically deal with grief?
- 3 How do you know when your grief is no longer healthy or appropriate? What are some symptoms of unhealthy grief? (Answers may include isolation, living in the past, loss of purpose, focusing only on the loss, etc.)

Grief is a part of life. We can't get rid of it or ignore it. In fact, it's healthy to grieve a loss or change. Even joy is often a part of our grief as we recognize God's hand in the situation and remember His plan for our lives. We can embrace seasons of grief with hope, knowing God is with us and for us.

UNDERSTANDING

Psalm 116 expresses thanks to God for His grace and goodness during a season of grief. The psalm focuses on praying to God, resting in God, walking with God, and worshiping God. Each of these can and should be done in a season of grief.

> READ PSALM 116:1-4.

- What kinds of events might the writer have faced before his writing of this psalm? What are some events in our lives that we might connect with the words in these verses?
- What did the psalmist do in response to God's provision during his time of grief?

James Boice says, “Psalm 116 is a hymn by an individual celebrating God’s deliverance from a sickness so severe he thought he was going to die.” The experience of having been sick, having prayed, and having God answer him so clearly and powerfully left such an impression on the psalmist that he spent some time reflecting, and these reflections are scattered throughout the Psalm.¹

Many Christians know the joy of deep, personal prayer with God in both good times and bad. They find that regular times of prayer bring their lives more completely into harmony with His purpose. Others do not realize the tremendous opportunity they are missing and pray only at meals, bedtime, and other occasional moments of serious need. Regular periods of prayer help bring our lives into harmony with God’s purpose. At the same time, life sometimes brings sudden, great challenges, and we then join the psalmist in praying “LORD, save me!” God stands ready to hear us whatever situation we face. The important thing is that we remember to call on Him and trust Him when we do.

> READ PSALM 116:5-8.

- What kinds of feelings and thoughts does a person have when physically or emotionally exhausted?

- In light of these kinds of emotions, why was the writer able to rest in God?

- How does “resting in God” express thanks to Him?

The psalmist fully recognized God as the Source of his deliverance. The Lord had rescued him from the death that earlier threatened him (Psalm 116:3). We live in a fast-paced world filled with pain and grief at every turn. Many of us have so much to do, and we even find getting a good night’s sleep difficult. Doctors tell us we need to get enough physical rest, which is essential, yet the Bible encourages us to rest in God. We find our ultimate security in Him.

1. James M. Boice, *Psalms, Volume 3: Psalms 107–150* (Baker, 1998), <https://app.wordsearchbible.lifeway.com>.

- Read Hebrews 13:6. How does knowing God is for you, embracing you throughout life, help you face difficult seasons of life?

Since God provides for His people (see Matthew 6:25-34), believers can courageously face difficulties. The writer of Hebrews quoted Psalm 118:6. Literally, the Hebrew text has “(with) Yahweh for me.” God’s presence and support banish fear of what others can do. We all need these words as we work through seasons of grief.

> READ PSALM 116:9-19.

- What does it mean to walk before the Lord?
- What does verse 11 tell us about the psalmist’s trust in God and trust in others?
- How might we feel the same way as we walk through seasons of grief?

The word “walk” means to “live.” Therefore, walking with God means to live for God and be obedient to Him. In his alarm, the psalmist looked around and affirmed “everyone is a liar.” His desperate condition may have heightened his awareness of people’s universal sinful condition (Romans 3:4, 23). He ultimately could trust no one but God. God calls us to live in complete trust that He is good. Walking with God will bring our lives fulfillment we cannot know in any other way.

- What indication do we have from these final verses that the psalmist really sensed God’s embrace during his season of grief?
- How did he plan to repay God for His compassion and deliverance?

- Can we ever repay God for His goodness to us? If yes, in what way? If no, what is the basis for worship?
- Why is worship important even while we are experiencing grief?

In closing, the psalmist vowed to worship the Lord in the presence of God's people. This reminds us of the importance of godly community as we deal with grief. Christian brothers and sisters can remind us of the truth when the darkness threatens to close in around us. The psalm reminds us that we can always worship, even as we grieve. As we express gratitude to God in our great difficulty, we find joy that only He offers.

APPLICATION

- Are you grieving due to a loss of someone close to you? How does today's study speak to you? Are you able and willing to trust God to do something wonderful through this loss?
- How does it affect you to know that the God of the universe personally identifies with your pain and hurt in this life?
- What limitations, if any, have you been placing on God's ability to work in your most difficult life seasons?

PRAY

Thank God for His care, compassion, and deliverance as we experience the grief of this life.