

## Aim of lesson

To help the class develop their relationship with God by encouraging their own expression of praise and need for God by looking at the Psalms.

## Bible background

1 Chronicles 15:16-24; 16:4-42; 25; Psalms as mentioned below.

## Outline of lesson

### Which is the most ...?

Either use the workbook or have a large sheet of paper or blackboard in the classroom with, written on it:

Can you find?

- The longest Psalm
- The shortest Psalm.
- Five different authors.
- The songs of ascents (or degrees).
- A Psalm in which every verse ends with the same words.
- Five Psalms in a row that begin and end with 'Praise the Lord'.

Let the class have a few minutes to search through the Psalms to see which answers they can find and write on the sheet. Use the completed sheet to show how the Psalms are often very different one from another, written by different people in different circumstances, some when they are afraid, some when they are happy. Some of them are cries for help, others are planned for praise in the temple worship. If the class found the names of Asaph, Heman and Ethan, ask them look up 1 Chronicles 15:16-17 to show that the Psalms they wrote, and possibly all those with the title 'To the Chief Musician', (e.g. Psalm 80) were probably written for singing in the Tabernacle or Temple services. Psalm 136 would probably be said or sung by one person or a choir with the whole congregation singing the response after each verse.

You may find it useful to have the following answers:

- Psalm 119
- Psalm 117
- David, Moses (Psalm 90), Asaph, Heman (Psalm 88), Ethan (Psalm 89), and Solomon (Psalm 127)
- Psalms 120-134
- Psalm 136
- Psalms 146-150

## Praising God

You may like to divide the class into two groups: one to make a list of all the instruments and activities involved in praising God mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:16-24 and 16:4-6; and the other to make a list of all the things involved in praise in Psalm 150. Do not let them forget themselves in the last line.

## The Psalms as prayers

Though many other things are used in worshipping God, the psalm itself is an expression in words of what the writer wants to say to God; it is therefore a prayer, e.g. praise, worship, thanks, confession, asking for others, asking for yourself. You may like to have them each look up one of the following references and say what sort of prayer they are; Psalm 104:1; 75:1; 51:1; 72:1; 102:1.

In the last section in the workbook ask the class to write in the first box for PRAISE the things they can find in Psalm 145 for which the writer praises God. In the second box ask them to think of things that they praise God for. Praising is very similar to thanking but is more focused on God himself, his character and his attributes. Try to encourage them to think of God's greatness and to leave things God has done for them to the THANKS section.

Work together through elements in each case using the first box for the reasons for thanks, confession or petition as seen in the following references and the second for the class's own response. The last section has two parts; the first is for asking for others (intercession) and the second for oneself.

Praise	Psalm 145
Thanks	Exodus 15:1-15 (not all the psalms are in the book of Psalms)
Sorry	Psalm 51 (especially title and verse 14)
Please – for others	Psalm 72
Please – for self	Psalm 54 5.

The thoughts in the workbook, especially those that are the class's own reasons for praise and thanks, could be written out imaginatively as a modern psalm. This could be read at the close of Sunday School, or made into a small poster for the classroom.

## Digging deeper

### Poetry Books

This section covers the poetry books in the Bible and suggests learning the names of the five books in order.

## **Relevance to our lives**

Ask the class to try to include in their own prayers during the week a short expression of praise to begin with. This is often the hardest part of prayer but it helps our minds to be centred on God and who he is, rather than on ourselves and our problems.

## **Prayer**

Dear Lord, you are a wonderful God and a great creator. Thank you for forgiving our sins and caring for all our needs.

## **Other suggestions for activities**

- Many of the Psalms praise God for his actions or appeal to God for deliverance in a particular time in history. See Psalms 105, 106, 137. The class may like to think of an incident in the Bible or a present day situation for which to write a psalm. This could be one that obviously needs God's help like Daniel and his friends going into captivity, or an area of the world suffering from war, hunger or drought. On the other hand, one could consider a happy psalm to reflect the joy of a blind man who had been healed or of thankfulness for a summer holiday.
- You may be able to find a suitable newspaper to divide up among the class for them to find in it things to thank or praise God for, things to ask God for and things to confess as wrong to God. If you do this you will probably need to introduce the idea of praying for the forgiveness of others as the great men of God did, e.g. Daniel, Moses, Samuel, Ezra.