

Adult Teaching Resources

November 22, 2020



The Right Stuff

Matthew 23:1-12—“The Right Stance”

Matthew 25:1-13—“The Right Preparation”

Matthew 25:14-30—“The Right Investment”

Psalm 100— “Good God!”

Christmas Letters

1 Corinthians 1:1-9—“Every Good Gift”

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“Good God!”

Psalm 100

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Opening

After everyone arrives for class, pass out small slips of paper and a pen to everyone. With this Sunday being the Sunday before Thanksgiving, it's only natural to spend time giving thanks for what God has done in our lives this past year. This year, though, has been challenging. Starting with the pandemic, the rest of the year seems to have been an uphill battle.

Even so, God has been with us, and God has provided along the way.

Ask your class to use their slips of paper to write down what they are thankful for in this past year. One “thank” per slip of paper. Pass out extra slips as needed.

Give everyone time to write, then collect all the slips of paper. As a thanksgiving prayer, start your prayer with, “God we give you thanks...” then read each slip of paper out loud, one at a time. After the last slip has been read, end your prayer in an appropriate way for your group.

Reading the Bible

Psalm 100 is a beautiful, and brief, Psalm. The five verses praise God in ways we expect from an ancient scripture whose words are timeless.

But, what if the psalmist wrote this psalm today? What words would he (or in our time and culture, she!) use? What images? What metaphors? What promises?

Give each person a piece of paper and a pen. Ask them to rewrite Psalm 100, line by line, with words, images, and phrases that are current. This is not an activity to throw away what is old and replace it with something new. This is an attempt to think deeply about the ancient words and write in a way that praises God and attempts to send the same message as the psalmist.

Give everyone time to write, then ask for volunteers to share their psalms. If you'd like, using lines and phrases from everyone, compile the favorite lines and phrases into a class version of Psalm 100.

Making Connections

What is the most beautiful noise you have ever heard? Where were you? Who/What made it? What specifically do you remember about it? Have you heard it repeated?

What is the most joyful noise you have ever heard? Where were you? Who/What made it? What specifically do you remember about it? Have you heard it repeated?

What is the most beautiful noise you have ever made? What was the occasion? Have you repeated it?

What is the most joyful noise you have ever made? What was the occasion? Have you repeated it?

What is your favorite hymn or worship song? What does that song say to you about God?

In your opinion, what is the proper protocol for behavior in church during worship? Is hand-clapping ok? Is shouting ok? Is jumping up and down ok? Is foot stomping ok? What do you think is the best way to praise God in worship?

What is the most joy-filled, celebratory style of music you can imagine in church?

What does “worship God” mean to you?

How do you enter your sanctuary or worship center? With what attitude do you enter? With what expectation do you enter? How is your entrance acceptable to God?

How do you praise God in your worship? How is your praise acceptable to God?

What is “steadfast love?” How does God show love to you? How do you know it’s from God? How do you know it is “steadfast?”

So What?

In the large group, create a worship service of thanksgiving, using one of the rewritten psalms, or the compiled group psalm (if you created one) as the basis for your worship.

Go to the board and ask for suggestions for the different elements of worship that would praise God and be worthy of God.

What songs or hymns would you sing?

What types of prayers would you pray?

Would you have other scripture? If so, what?

Would there be a sermon? If so, on what topic?

Who would lead?

What would be expected from the congregation?

So What? *continued*

Write out the order of worship, taking time to be intentional with the different worship elements you choose to include.

When you are finished, compare your worship service with the regular worship service of your church and other churches you know.

How close is this worship to what you know?

How different is this worship to what you know?

Could you worship this way every Sunday?

What have you learned about God from this exercise?

What have you learned about yourself from this exercise?

What does God desire from you with worship?

Spend time in conversation and discussion before closing with prayer.

The Challenge

This week, take a moment each day and thank God for something from this past year. Include your thanksgiving as a part of your daily prayer.

Prayer

Loving God, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Calypso 100—Here’s my take on a modern paraphrase of Psalm 100, to be sung to a Caribbean beat similar to that of “The Belly Button Song.”

Verse 1 (vv. 1-2)

*Praise the Lord in his holy temple,
make a joyful noise and sing.
We will worship our God with gladness
praise the Lord for everything.*

Verse 2 (v. 3)

*Know ye that the Lord is God, now
God has made us and is our king
We’re like the sheep within God’s pasture
what a blessed joy to sing!*

Verse 3 (v. 4)

*Come on in with great thanksgiving
come into God’s courts with praise.
Life your hallelujahs up now,
bless God’s precious holy name.*

Verse 4 (v. 5)

*For you know the Lord is good now
Showing love that will not end.
God is faithful and eternal,
Always here to be our friend.*

Knowing God—There is a difference between knowing about someone and knowing them. The psalmist tells us that we can go beyond the simple knowledge that Yahweh is God — we can know God in a personal and intimate way, even as a shepherd and his sheep know each other.

How do we come to know a person? Through spending time together, even if we’re far apart and our communication is online. Should learning to know God be any different? Can we expect to *know* God without spending time in prayer, meditation, or through the simple wonder of appreciating the glorious world we have been given?

To know God, we must talk to God, and listen to God. We may speak in joy or in tears, with easy words of thanks or hard words of sorrow and complaint. Whatever we have to say, God is willing to hear. Are we equally willing to listen, attuning our spiritual ear to whatever manner God chooses to speak to us?

The LORD is God—We can’t be sure how YHWH, the Hebrew Bible’s special name for God, should be pronounced. This is in part because ancient Hebrew was written without vowels, and before vowel notations were added, the Hebrew people came to believe that God’s name was too sacred to pronounce. So, when the scribes later added vowel points to the text, they put the vowels for “Adonai” (a generic word meaning “Lord”) with the consonants that we would render YHWH. In German, the same consonants would be rendered as JHVH. Early scholars translating the Bible into German didn’t recognize that the Hebrew used the consonants for Yahweh and the vowels for Adonai. They read them together, giving rise to the name “Jehovah,” a King James standby born as a Germanized version of two interlaced Hebrew names for God.

Digging Deeper *continued*

Thanks and thanksgiving—Verse four contains both the noun (thanksgiving) and verb (give thanks) forms of the basic Hebrew root for expressing gratitude. The noun form could refer either to a thanksgiving sacrifice or offering, or to the vocal praise that constitutes thanksgiving (Marvin Tate, *Psalms 51-100*, Word Biblical Commentary [Waco: Word Books, 1990], 538).

Things to be thankful for—There are many ways in which to see and to celebrate God's goodness. When she was a little girl, Barbara Ann Kipfer began to make a list of all the little things that made her happy. She started with an ordinary spiral bound notebook, and soon she had filled it up. She got more and bigger notebooks, and as she grew older, she continued adding to her collection of all the little things that gladden the eye and bring wonder to the heart. She included things like ancient alphabets, lighthouses, onions on a hot dog, honeysuckles, and big tubs of ice cream.

After twenty years of this, Kipfer persuaded Peter Workman to publish her list in a book called *14,000 Things To Be Happy About* (New York: Workman Publishing, 1990).

When I read from Barbara Ann's list, I discover that some of the things that make her happy don't do a thing for me. We are different people. But reading her list inspires me to be more aware and more appreciative of some of those little things that bring joy to my own life and remind me of the goodness of God.

I think of the smell of freshly-mown grass, writing with a new pencil, baked beans with real bacon, a new novel by a favorite author, or the voice of a friend on the phone.

Consider making your own list. What are some of those things, large or small, that make you happy and give you cause for thanking God?

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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Is it “We are his,” or “Not we ourselves”?

How should we properly translate the second line of Ps. 100:3? The question has long provided an interpretive conundrum. Should it be something like “It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves” (the familiar option followed by KJV and NAS95), or “It is he that has made us, and we are his/we belong to him” (NRSV, NET, HCSB, NIV)?

The problem is not so much one of translation as of choosing which textual option to translate. The received Hebrew text at the heart of scholarly editions was handed down through hundreds of years by special scribes known as the Masoretes, who took careful note of inconsistencies or apparent problems with the text.

The Masoretes would not change the text that had been passed on, but at places where they believed the text may have been incorrectly preserved, they added marginal notes containing what they perceived to be a better reading. Scholars refer to the main text as *ketiv* (what is written), and the alternate, preferred text as *qere* (to be read).

In Ps. 100:3, the *ketiv* and the *qere* reading are two different words that are spelled differently but both pronounced identically, which explains the potential confusion. Both words (or word combinations) are pronounced as “low,” which provides an English analogue: we pronounce the words “lo” and “low” the same, but they mean different things.

The *ketiv* reading uses the negative particle *lō*, leading to the translation “not we ourselves,” even though there’s no word for “ourselves” in the text.

Scribes and scholars have tended to judge this as an inferior reading, in part because there’s no indication that anyone was claiming that the Israelites had created themselves, so it appears to answer a question nobody was asking.

The *qere* reading (*lō*) is a combination of the preposition *l-*, meaning “for” or “belonging to” and the third person pronoun *ō*, meaning “him.” The combination generally gives the sense of “belonging to him” or “his.” This leads to translations like “we are his,” which fit the context better.

Ancient texts were all copied by hand, and substituting *lō* for *lō* would be an easy mistake to make.

Some scholars favor a third translation option, noting that the *ketiv* reading *lō* was also occasionally used as an interjection meaning “indeed” or “surely,” resulting in “surely we are his people and the sheep of his pasture.”

Whichever translation we choose, the end result is the same: God is creator, and we are God’s creation; we relate to God as sheep in God’s pasture who follow and depend on the shepherd.