

Exploring the fullness of God

Leaders' Copy with additional notes

Week 5: The Faithful God

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing and sharing together.

Icebreaker. Play a memory game. Arrange twenty small random items on a tray and cover it with a towel. You will also need paper and pens. Allow the group to see the items for thirty seconds and then recover the tray. Challenge the group, working as individuals, to write down the items they remember. How does the group rate their memory and what things do they find it easiest to remember?

WORSHIP

Go around the group sharing your favourite lyrics from a hymn or worship song and the reason why they help you to praise God.

WORD

Read Psalm 103.

When we explored the True God, we read that Moses encouraged the Israelites to remember God whatever their circumstances and to pass on the faith to the next generation. Remembering is also important in this psalm as our worship for God will grow cold unless we continually remember his faithfulness. God chooses not to remember our sins but has mercy on us, promising to remember us from everlasting to everlasting and for future generations. In the memory game, most individuals will not be able to remember all twenty items. However, as a group, you probably can. This also applies to our spiritual lives; we need each other to help us to remember all God's blessings.

Growth Group Notes

Spring 2024



1. In verses 1-2 David starts off by talking to himself, encouraging himself to praise God. Dr Martin Lloyd Jones said: "Have you realised that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? You have to take yourself in hand. You have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. The essence of the matter is to understand that this self of ours, this other person within us; has got to be handled." How do you feel about this quotation? When was the last time you needed to give yourself a good talking to?
2. If you had not become a Christian, how do you think your life would have been different? What are you most grateful to God for?
3. In verses 1-5 David counts his blessings, making a list of all he has as a result of his relationship with God. Do any of David's words resonate with you?
4. In verses 6-8 David moves from personal praise to directing others to praise God. He does this by remembering how God revealed himself to Moses. This is a direct quotation from Exodus 34.6-7 which lists seven characteristics of God.
Read Exodus 34.6-7, then ask everyone to close their bibles and to write down as many of the characteristics as they can remember?

Exploring the fullness of God

5. The centre of the psalm in verses 8-12 focuses on God's love towards us. He had mercy on us and does not treat us as our sins deserve. How did God ultimately forgive our sins and remove them from us?
6. Read verses 13-18 again. How can these verses comfort and encourage us?
7. The psalm began with David commanding his own soul to worship God. In verses 19-22, the awesome scope of the praise God deserves is highlighted. How should this picture of the universe praising God redefine our view of praise at a service?

WHAT NEXT?

The book of psalms is a collection of songs, statements to God of prayer and praise. They often convey professions of faith and trust. The psalmists expressed their feelings and emotions in their writings, so we can easily relate to them. They teach us about our inner selves and inspire us in our personal relationships with God. They point backwards to historical events, forward to the coming of Jesus and to God himself.

What can we do?

Each morning, for the next couple of weeks, read Psalm 103 as a reminder to yourself to praise God throughout the day.

Every night before you go to sleep, write a journal recording all the things you can thank God for from that day.

Study notes for leaders

Q1. We can all relate to this to some degree. Many of us struggle to do anything unless we feel like it and so, if you don't feel like praising God then we don't. David is motivating himself to praise God, and praise God more wholeheartedly. We will learn through this psalm some strategies for deepening our own worship.

Q2. If group members struggle to think of any differences that being a Christian has made to their lives, this should disturb us. Give the group members quiet time to reflect and encourage them to be imaginative about the directions they could have taken without God.

Q4. The seven characteristics are: Compassion; Gracious; Slow to anger; Abounding in love; Abounding in faithfulness; Maintaining love to thousands; Forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.

Q5. God not only forgives our sins but separates them from us. This is wonderfully illustrated in the Day of Atonement with the setting free of the scapegoat (Leviticus 16.20-24). In parallel, Jesus himself was taken outside of the city to be executed and took on himself the sin of the world.

Q6. David knows that our lives are short in comparison to the eternal nature of God. He describes us as grass and dust. However, he triumphantly celebrates God's everlasting love to us, despite otherwise insignificant lives. David also recognises that God's faithfulness is not limited to his generation. We are the fulfilment of this promise.

Q7. The universe was designed to bring glory to God and our lives of praise are to be an integral part of this. When we attend large worship conferences, we rejoice in feeling part of a greater body praising God. However, this is permanently true as we join with all nature whenever and wherever we glorify God.