



## "REASONS TO REJOICE"

"Your Words were found, and I ate them, and Your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Jeremiah 15:16

### "All About Praise" LESSON 6

This week we will be studying Psalm 147, one of the five joyous psalms of praise (146-150). All five psalms begin and end with the word "Hallelujah," which is translated "Praise the Lord." Some scholars believe the authors to be Haggai and Zechariah, but no one knows for certain. We will call the author the "psalmist"! In the previous 145 psalms, we have read about the author's grief, shame, victories, joys, and struggles. These final psalms focus on words of praise. Psalm 146 begins with the statement, "I will praise the Lord all my life" and proceeds to invite the reader to join in. Psalm 148 tells us that God should be praised from the "Heavens above to the earth below. (148:1,7) Psalm 149 tells us how to praise God: with a new song (Psalm 149:1). Psalm 150 tells everyone to praise God, "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord." (Psalm 150:6) Here in Psalm 147, the author shows us what we can praise God for.

The psalmist shows us that the recipient of all our praise and worship should be the Lord God Himself! Praise is not about us; it is about responding to God's glory and goodness. He alone deserves all praise, honor and glory. As you read Psalm 147, may your hearts and minds be turned upward in praise to the God of all creation, who has an everlasting, unfailing, and unfathomable amount of love for you and me!

#### First Day

1. Read Psalm 147:1-20. Write a one or two-sentence summary, explaining the main point.
2. Are there any repeated words, phrases, or thoughts?

Some commentators believe that Psalm 147 may have been written for the dedication of the reconstructed walls of Jerusalem during the time of Nehemiah. (Nehemiah 12:27) Although this isn't known for sure, it seems to be written, for sure, "post-Babylonian exile" at some time, especially because the Psalmist praises God for "building up Jerusalem."

3. How many times does the Psalmist use the word "I"?
4. How many times does the Psalmist use the pronoun "He," referring to God? How many times does he use the word "Lord"? What does this tell us?
5. What would you title it?
6. What application, challenges or encouragement do you find for yourself upon first reading?
7. Take some time and write your own psalm of praise. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide and direct your heart towards Him, despite what difficulties you may be facing. (Include praise for who He is, why He's worthy, and what He's done.)

Just a side note -- read over your prayer of praise. How many times did you use the word "I" or refer to yourself or your problems?

Just saying ... ☺

**Memory Verse of the Week:** "Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is beautiful." Psalm 147:1

## Second Day

**Review your memory verse.**

Commentators differ on how they divide Psalm 147 into sections. Many divide it into three parts: verses 1-6, 7-11, and 12-20. Some break it down even further, such as the New International Version. That translation gives "seven distinct matters for which God should be praised."

James Montgomery Boice lists them in the following way: "Using this division, we can capture the thrust of the psalm's praise by considering (1) God's care for His people, (2) God's care of the least significant, (3) God's provision for His creation, (4) God's delight in the godly, (5) God's blessing on the nation, (6) God's rule over creation, and (7) God's revelation of Himself to Israel. These considerations, like the psalm, focus on God entirely." I'm going to kind of combine the two!

1. Read Psalm 147:1-120. Go back and focus on verses 1-3. Also, read Psalm 33:1, 92:1, and 135:3. Why is it "good and pleasant" to praise the Lord? How do verses 2 and 3 answer that?

Verse 1 may also be translated "How good it is to sing psalms and how pleasant to make fitting praise."

2. Why and how is praise "fitting"?
3. How much time do you spend in "simply praise" during your prayer time? (What changes can you make?)
4. In verses 1-6 what does the psalmist praise God for?

Reflecting on how God brought the exiles back and re-established Jerusalem as a city makes the psalmist think back and remember God's power.

5. What terms does he use for the Jewish exiles?
6. What does God do to the oppressors?
7. What contrast do you see between verses 3 and 4? Why is this significant?

Wiersbe said, "The God who made the Heavens is concerned about your broken heart. The One who set the galaxies in motion is the same One who addresses your needs." Even when you feel like no one else on earth cares, God does. The God of the Heavens is the God of your broken heart.

8. Are you, or have you ever been, broken-hearted? How does this section encourage you? What does He also want to do for you?
9. God numbered and named each star. What does that tell us about His power? What does that say about His ability to meet your needs?
10. God wants to heal your "wounds" as well. Do you feel wounded? Have you brought those wounds or your broken "pieces" to Him to heal?

I hate to keep quoting Boice, but I like his remarks on this section. He said, "The major point of this stanza is not that God cares for the stars -- though He does -- but that the One who is mighty enough to number and name the stars also concerns Himself for us, who are insignificant and weak by comparison. We would expect God to have created the stars, but that God should sustain even the most humble of His creatures while saving them from the wicked, who would destroy them, and casting the wicked down, that is most remarkable and is worthy of the humble and godly person's praise."

We feel so insignificant at times, yet we are completely significant and important to Him. He created the stars, but He heals our broken heart. That is truly a huge **"Reason to Rejoice!"**

### Third Day

**Work on your memory verse.**

1. Read Psalm 147:1-20. Focus on verses 7-11. What is the main point of this section?

The author adds a harp to his praising and singing in verse 7. John Phillips writes, "This is the first hint, in these closing doxologies, of the use of musical instruments to add dimension to praise. By the time we reach the last Psalm the whole orchestra will be involved." (Psalm 150)

2. It's important to notice that "thanksgiving" is part of his praise. Do you include a time of thanksgiving in your prayer and praise time as well? Stop and make a list right now of things you are thankful for today.
3. This psalm is similar to Psalm 104. Read Psalm 104 and pick out some verses that really speak to your heart.

4. Not only does God "create" all things, He sustains them. How do these Psalms reveal that truth?
  
5. Notice that God even takes care of the "beasts." What does that tell you?
  
6. According to verse 10, what does the Lord "not" take pleasure in? What do you think that means?
  
7. In verse 11 what does He take pleasure "in"?

Scholars believe that "the strength of a horse" is symbolic of military might, and that the "legs of a man" are a symbol of "marching armies." (We remember what God did to the horses of the Egyptians when they chased the Israelites across the Red Sea!) He is not impressed by the strength of anyone or anything. He is greater, stronger, and mightier than all. I love what Arnold Rhodes wrote in the Layman's Bible Commentary. He said, "As illustrations of His providence, the Psalmist praises God for rain, vegetation, and food for beast and bird. Yet God does not delight in the physical strength of animal or man; He takes pleasure in those who respond to Him in reverence and hope."

8. What does it mean to "hope in His mercy"?
  
9. What about you? Are you bringing Him pleasure? Are you trying to impress the Lord with your strength, wit, and power, or are you placing your hope, reverence and trust in Him? (Why does that please Him so much?)

This verse has always been interesting and convicting to me. I've been a runner all my life, and during various seasons, I have allowed it to become almost an idol to me. That "gift" became my god; running was my "identity." It took many years for me to understand that my self-worth was in Christ, not in who I am or what I do. Verse 10 has always spoken to me and reminded me that it's not the strength or the power in my legs, or the gift or talent that He's given me, that pleases the Lord. It's whether or not I fear, trust, and hope in Him that brings Him pleasure. I'm taking this verse a little bit out of context, I know, but it has always served as a visual reminder of my past, and how He has changed my thought process and attitude on who I am in Him. ☺

10. What verse or verses in this section really spoke to your heart? Can you share why?

That's all for today. May you be encouraged to know that God is not only the Creator of all things, He is the Sustainer as well. Yet in all He creates, YOU are what pleases Him. Ahhh ... what an amazing thought!

#### **Fourth Day**

**Spend some time on your verse!**

1. Read Psalm 147:1-20. Reread verses 12-14. What's the main point of this section?

If this Psalm was written during the rebuilding of the Temple, the walls were still in disrepair. If it was written when it was completed, then the gates were already in place. Either way, God Himself was Israel's protector. It was His city; it had HIS name on it.

2. According to verses 12-14, what does He bless Israel with?

3. How can we apply these verses to us today?

When the psalmist writes about Jerusalem, he reminds them that God strengthens the city, blesses the people, grants them peace, and provides good food. John Phillips wrote, "We see the Lord securing the *people* of Jerusalem so that the little ones could grow up under His smile and blessing. We see Him securing the *peace* of Jerusalem so that walls and gates would be little more than a decorative flourish. We see Him securing the *prosperity* of Jerusalem so that barns were filled to overflowing with the produce of the land."

4. How does God give us "peace" within our borders? Read Philipians 4:6-7, Ephesians 2:14, Romans 5:1-2, and John 14:27.

5. Are you experiencing "peace" within your borders right now? If not, what is robbing you of your peace? What can you do?

6. Is it possible to have peace, even when you're in the middle of a trial or difficult circumstance? What verses or Bible story illustrate this truth?

There are many stories of men and women in Scripture that still had "peace" while facing trials and tribulations. I think of Paul and Silas singing praise songs and hymns while sitting in prison. (Acts 16:25-34) Or Joseph as he sat in prison for something he didn't do. (Genesis 39) And Stephen, when he was brought before the council and accused of speaking blasphemy, didn't even flinch in fear. Acts 6:15 tells us that his face "was as the face of an angel."

7. Read one of the greatest illustrations of this kind of peace in Mark 4:35-41. Summarize this story in your own words. How is "peace" displayed in this story?
  
8. The Lord also "strengthens" the bars of your gates, being your "Protector." Read the following verses and write your thoughts.
  - a. Psalm 56:9-11
  - b. Psalm 18:1-2
  - c. Joshua 1:5
  - d. Psalm 57:1
  - e. 2 Timothy 4:17-18
  - f. 1 Corinthians 10:13
  - g. 2 Thessalonians 3:3
  
9. Do you need strength or protection in some area of your life right now? What should you do?
  
10. He "fills" you with the finest wheat. He will always provide your needs. Read Matthew 6:25-34. How do these verses encourage you? Challenge you?

That's it for today. May you spend time today thanking Him for His provision, His strength, and His protection. He is such a wonderful God! He is the Protector of our souls!

### Fifth Day

**Write out your verse from memory.**

1. Read Psalm 147:1-20. Now focus on verses 15-20. What's the main point?

Derek Kidner says that in these final verses, "The unifying 'theme' is the Word of God in its two great functions: to command and communicate."

2. What does the Word "command and communicate"?

The psalmist is remembering that God is worthy to be praised because He has done so much for them. He strengthened them, fed them, and protected them. He also gave them land, as well as His Word and His Law. According to verse 20, He has not dealt "with any nation" like He has dealt with Israel. They were, and still are, truly blessed.

3. God's Word is powerful. What do these verses say about His Word?

God's Word "runs very swiftly." When God speaks, His Word quickly accomplishes His purpose. God rules and runs the universe by His very Words. We can trust His Word. He has gone on record, so to speak. His integrity is at stake if He were to break His Word. He can't; He won't.

4. How does the truth in the paragraph above bring you encouragement and hope?

5. What does God's Word "melt"? (What does that mean?)

6. God's Word can start and stop winter. He controls everything: the cold, the heat, the waves, the hail, the snow. What does that say about Him? How does it echo the truth in Psalm 147:5?
  
7. Scholars say that verses 19-20 are an exclamation of wonder. What do you think that means?
  
8. According to these verses, what was Israel's exalted and exclusive privilege?

No other nation was given the privilege of having God's Word, with all its principles, truths, and responsibilities. Israel has a special covenant relationship with God that no other nation has. Verse 19 tells us that He "gave His Word to Jacob." Jacob, in his weakness, was given the name Israel, receiving this "special-nation" status with God. "Jacob is the nation in its feebleness and failure; Israel is the nation in its princely power." (Phillips)

Phillips goes on to say, "For a nation, however, to be bound to Heaven by a solemn treaty, given by the Living God, such is Israel's privilege alone. God has instituted no such treaty with the United States, nor with great Britain, nor with Germany, France, or Spain. God does not have an embassy in Washington, nor does He have one in Rome. God does not guarantee the defense of our country or any country - except Israel. Nor has God promised to make any city His capital, except Jerusalem. For all that, the psalmist shouted, 'Hallelujah!'"

9. We also have the privilege of having God's Word. Do you rejoice in it as one who finds great treasure? Do you realize how powerful His Word is? Do you regularly praise God for the privilege of having His written Word?

10. Is there a hard situation you are facing and you need *God's* wind to blow? Are you dealing with a hard heart that needs to be melted? (Maybe even your own.) Are some bars keeping you hostage that need to be melted or bust open? Will you stop and ask *God* to say the Word? Will you trust and obey that Word? Do you believe He is in control of **EVERYTHING**?
  
11. Look back over Psalm 147. What specific truth spoke to your heart?
  
12. What was the most significant thing you learned about *God*?
  
13. What was the most significant thing you learned about yourself?
  
14. Hopefully, you can remember the last six weeks and the psalms we've studied together. What was your favorite Psalm, and why?
  
15. Are you changed as a result of studying His Word?

**Ladies, you are one of my favorite "Reasons to Rejoice"!  
Love you!**

