

# Praise Him in Joyful Times



Psalms 120—134 are called “Songs of Ascent.” Scholars suggest travelers or pilgrims used these psalms as they traveled to Jerusalem, which is located on a high hill. These songs were opportunities for the Jewish people to praise and worship God while traveling to the Temple for yearly festivals and sacrifices. While we no longer have to make pilgrimages to the Temple, these psalms provide examples for us to praise God during various circumstances and occasions.

### Psalm 121:1

*“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.”*

There are always times when we need help. We get overwhelmed with life—bills, work, kids, family, household chores, and even what to cook for dinner. If someone would just take out the trash without having to be asked or reminded...that would be nice. It feels like there isn't time in the day to catch your breath.

But, we can rejoice because God doesn't sleep. If our only time to get away from the noise is in the middle of the night, He is there to hear us. The God who *made* heaven and earth can *move* heaven and earth to come to your rescue.

### Reflective Questions

In what big or small way has God recently come to your rescue?

Take this moment to praise Him for His help by writing *your* verse to Psalm 121.

### Psalm 122:1

*“I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.”*

Meeting with God's people is an occasion for rejoicing. Sometimes the routine of going to church can become a drain on us physically and emotionally. The song lyrics, “I'm easy like Sunday morning” doesn't make sense to me. However, the effort is well rewarded. God, in His infinite

wisdom, will use a Christian sister to give encouragement, even though she may never know what we are dealing with at that moment.

Scripture instructs us to fellowship and worship with other believers (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25). God knows we need encouragement, accountability, and time with other believers. Having this relationship is an occasion for rejoicing.

The opportunity to worship a big God helps put our challenges and problems into perspective. Our problems are real and can be overwhelming, but when viewed beside a great, glorious God, we can rejoice in knowing He can handle it.

### Reflective Questions

What is a recent example of support you received from a fellow believer at church?

Who is someone you can encourage at church?

### Psalm 126:3, 6

*"The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad....He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."*

This psalm is a reflection of when God restored His people after their Babylonian captivity. Although the Jewish people suffered affliction, God kept His promise to restore His people. This restoration caused much rejoicing among the Jews.

It is appropriate for us to rejoice when restoration happens in our lives. Restoration can occur in a friendship, marriage, family, church, or other relationship. It is easy to rejoice when we start listing our blessings—family, church, job, house, clothing, food, etc. God has done great things for us, but that can be easy to forget when life is not going so great, when the family is having a conflict, church people are quarreling, our job is monotonous, etc. God didn't promise us there would be no hardships; He promised us deliverance *through* those hardships. We must learn to trust God for deliverance and restoration, even when life gets hard.

Forget the laundry list of physical blessings and reduce it down to what is paramount for our souls: Christ died to deliver us from the captivity of sin and restore our relationship with God. Now that is a reason to rejoice!

When life gets complicated this week, stop and remember your greatest reason to rejoice—salvation. Share your salvation experience with someone this week.

Verse 6 gives us confidence that tears of sorrow will eventually turn to tears of joy. I can imagine a farmer taking his last bit of seed and throwing it out on the ground. That seed could be eaten, but instead it is sown for a future harvest.

## Reflective Questions

Recall a time when God took your sorrow and turned it into a time of rejoicing?

### Psalm 127:1, 3; 128:3

*"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it:...children are an heritage of the Lord." "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine...thy children like olive plants..."*

Both of these psalms identify the home as a blessing of God. Through a variety of metaphors—building a house, city watchman, arrows, vine, and olive plants—the psalmist illustrates that honoring God and walking in His ways is the key to a secure and fruitful home. Your family is a reason to rejoice. Regardless of your home situation, God has blessed you.

No family is perfect. We all have our flaws. But God can use us in spite of our flaws and imperfections. A brief review of some of the significant families in Scripture demonstrates this truth quite effec-

tively. Adam and Eve's eldest son murdered his brother. Jacob's sons sold their younger brother as a slave and covered it up by lying to their father about him being killed by a wild animal. King David's eldest son, Amnon, raped his half-sister. Her brother, Absalom, killed him and then later tried to overthrow his father's kingdom.

Dysfunctional families are nothing new. God has been working with and through them for centuries. God's grace is demonstrated in the way He blesses and uses us regardless of our brokenness. This is another reason to rejoice.

### Reflective Questions

How is God's grace evidenced through your family?

What are some situations about your family that you recognize as a blessing of God?

### Psalm 130:5

*"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope."*

Waiting is probably the most difficult thing to do. We want everything right now. I believe God, and I know He is in control; I just want to know the *when*. Give me a timeline, of when the need will be met, and I can wait patiently, sort of. But, I suppose that would negate faith. Why would you need faith and hope? One of the most encouraging passages of Scripture involves waiting: "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

Although waiting is not easy, we have hope in God's promises. An example of His love and care for us is displayed in Psalm 91:14-16. God says He will deliver us, protect us, and answer us when we call on His name. His Word is packed full of similar promises to us (1 John 2:25—eternal life; 1 John 1:9—forgiveness; Philippians 4:19—needs supplied; Psalm 32:8—wisdom and guidance; 1 Corinthians 10:13—overcoming temptation; Psalm 91:4-6—deliverance and protection; etc.).

## Reflective Questions

How have you experienced waiting on God?

During the wait, what promise of God has been particularly relevant to your situation?

The word “wait” in this verse carries the connotation of *to expect, look eagerly for, to hope*. It sounds like this is more of an anticipatory situation than a dreaded one. We are waiting for, looking eagerly for God's redemption. Definitely a time of rejoicing!

## Psalm 133:1

*“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”*

Unity? Is it possible in the church family? Yes, it is. Unity brings strength and blessing. If I am not living in peace and harmony with my Christian family, it has the potential to weaken me spiritually. Disagreement and fighting also harms our ability to rejoice. Christ, in John 17, prayed for oneness for us just as He and the Father are one. We can rejoice in our unity of purpose and belonging in Christ.

Unity does not mean we are “cookie-cutter” Christians. People are diverse. We have different personalities, different gifts, and different opinions. Since we are imperfect beings, we will not always agree on everything, but we are to glorify God in all we do (Romans 15:5-6). First Corinthians 12 reminds us there are diversities among us, but



only one Spirit, one God, one Lord. We can rejoice that God has called us to work together as the body of Christ to accomplish the mission He has called us to—winning others to Christ.

### Reflective Questions

What is the difference between unity and uniformity?

What strengths exist in our church as a result of the unity of our diversity?

### Psalm 134:1-3

*“Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord...Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord...The Lord that made heaven and earth.”*

This last Song of Ascent appears to be especially directed to the priests or ministers (servants of the Lord) who were involved in the evening sacrifice as prescribed in the Law of Moses (Exodus 29:39). It seems as if the arriving pilgrims are calling out to the priests to honor the Lord in the sanctuary. Verse 3 could be a continuation of the congregation’s encouragement to the priests, or it could also be a response of the priests to the congregation. Either way, the phrase, “The Lord that made heaven and earth,” states an obvious reason for praising God—He created it all and is our source of blessing. If we have no other explicit justification for rejoicing, the fact that God created all is a great motivation.

Various roles of ministry exist in the church. Some are before the people, and some are in the congregation. We can rejoice that each of us has the privilege of serving God in a way that honors Him.

### Reflective Questions

What spiritual gifts has God given you to use in building His kingdom?

For a free spiritual gift analysis, visit: [bit.ly/CGI-SpiritualGifts](http://bit.ly/CGI-SpiritualGifts)

The congregation of believers at the Temple was not allowed inside the Holy Place. The congregation gathered for worship in the Temple courts. Our place of worship is different, our form of worship is different, and our style of worship is different. The *object* of our worship is what matters.

Psalm 34:1 says, “I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.” Praising God is not just a formal, structured occasion. Throughout the psalms we are reminded to bless the Lord and praise His name. Psalm 150 affirms reasons to rejoice and praise God. His mighty acts and His excellent greatness are to be praised. We are also instructed to use instruments to praise Him. The main idea in our instruction about praising God is found in verse 6: “Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord.” We are commanded to praise the Lord—in all times, in all things...as long as we have breath.

**About the Writer:** Diane Conn is a freelance proofreader and editor. She has served as WNAC bookkeeper and in numerous offices on the local, district, and state level in Florida and Oklahoma. Diane earned a B.A. in Theology from Randall University. She resides in Antioch, Tennessee, with her husband Danny and a high-energy yellow Lab named Tuck. Diane is a preacher’s daughter, preacher’s wife, and she loves Dr. Pepper.