

## Songs of Praise

Devotional Reading: Psalm 148  
Background Scripture: Psalms 146–150

### Psalm 146

**<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.**

**Praise the LORD, my soul.**

**<sup>2</sup> I will praise the LORD all my life;**

**I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.**

**<sup>3</sup> Do not put your trust in princes,**

**in human beings, who cannot save.**

**<sup>4</sup> When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;**

**on that very day their plans come to nothing.**

**<sup>5</sup> Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,**

**whose hope is in the LORD their God.**

**<sup>6</sup> He is the Maker of heaven and earth,**

**the sea, and everything in them—**

**he remains faithful forever.**

**<sup>7</sup> He upholds the cause of the oppressed**

**and gives food to the hungry.**

**The LORD sets prisoners free,**

**<sup>8</sup> the LORD gives sight to the blind,**

**the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,**

**the LORD loves the righteous.**

**<sup>9</sup> The LORD watches over the foreigner**

**and sustains the fatherless and the widow,**

**but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.**

**<sup>10</sup> The LORD reigns forever,**

**your God, O Zion, for all generations.**

**Praise the LORD.**

### Psalm 150

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

Praise God in his sanctuary;  
praise him in his mighty heavens.

<sup>2</sup> Praise him for his acts of power;  
praise him for his surpassing greatness.

<sup>3</sup> Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,  
praise him with the harp and lyre,

<sup>4</sup> praise him with timbrel and dancing,  
praise him with the strings and pipe,

<sup>5</sup> praise him with the clash of cymbals,  
praise him with resounding cymbals.

<sup>6</sup> Let everything that has breath praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD.

## Key Text

*I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.—Psalm 146:2*

## Worship in the Covenant Community

### Unit 3: Psalms of Thanksgiving and Praise

Lessons 10–13

### Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize why God is to be praised based on [Psalms 146](#) and [150](#).
2. Provide examples from the Scriptures of God's care described in these psalms.
3. Identify an example of God's care in his or her life and write a short praise of thanks.

### Lesson Outline

#### Introduction

A. The Power of Praise

B. Lesson Context

#### I. Praise (Psalm 146:1–2)

A. The Lord (v. 1)

B. Exhortation (v. 2)

## II. Trust (Psalm 146:3–10)

- A. Misplaced in Princes (vv. 3–4)
- B. Perfectly Placed in God (vv. 5–10)

*Global Help*

## III. Exhortation (Psalm 150:1–6)

- A. Where (v. 1)
- B. Why (v. 2)
- C. How (vv. 3–5)
- D. Who (v. 6)

*What Sound?*

## Conclusion

- A. Praise Your Heavenly Father
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

## How to Say It

Israel *lz-ray-el.*

Jerusalem *Juh-roo-suh-lem.*

shofar (*Hebrew*) *show-far.*

Torah (*Hebrew*) *Tor-uh.*

Zion *Zi-un.*

## Introduction

### A. The Power of Praise

When I was 10 years old, my mother threw a 40th birthday party for my father. My dad had been a highly successful high school athletic coach for 15 years. In that time, he had led over 100 young adults to Christ. But a string of difficult years had made my dad eager to retire from coaching. Former athletes had moved on with their lives and no longer called. He began to feel that he had nothing more to contribute. He wondered if his work had been in vain.

My mother knew that my dad needed encouragement. She called up every single one of his former athletes and asked them to come to our hometown for a party. She rented out a nice restaurant and told my dad it was just a normal birthday party with his family. We walked into the dining room to find it packed with nearly 200 of his former athletes. For the next several hours while we ate dinner, I watched person after person get up to a microphone and share some special memory in praise of my dad. And as he received the stream of praise and encouragement, my father's weariness fell away, and he became joyful again.

Finally, I read my dad the letter I had written to him. I felt overwhelming pride over my father as I

lent my voice to the parade of other voices in praise of him. I felt connected to him and to all the other people whose lives he had changed. Praising someone else benefits not only them but also ourselves.

## B. Lesson Context

The book of Psalms ends with five psalms of praise ([Psalms 146–150](#)). Each of these psalms begins with the admonition to praise the Lord, which suggests that there are common links between them (see [Psalms 146:1](#); [150:1](#), below). Some have suggested that the initial declaration, “Praise the Lord” ([Psalm 146:1](#), below), is actually a title of the work. Both the writer and date of composition are unknown.

[Psalm 146](#) and [Psalm 150](#) are the bookends of this final grouping. At the same time, these two psalms have distinctive elements. [Psalm 146](#) exhorts the reader to rely on God alone and praises him in part to illustrate how reliable and awesome God is. [Psalm 150](#), on the other hand, is a relatively simple call to praise God. In both psalms, however, the psalmist reiterates the need to consider God’s mighty deeds and show gratitude for them.

## I. Praise ([Psalm 146:1–2](#))

### A. The Lord (v. 1)

#### 1. Praise the LORD. Praise the LORD, my soul.

*Praise the Lord* is a translation of a Hebrew word most Christians know very well: *hallelujah* (see [Psalm 150:1](#), below). The exhortation to praise is given first to the psalmist—to his *soul*, the seat of the mind and will. If [Psalms 146–150](#) are linked by the common command to praise God (as posited in the [Lesson Context](#)), then the psalmist’s choice to begin [Psalm 146](#) with an exhortation to oneself is likely significant. Praise leaders, preachers, and other leaders in times of worship do well to adopt a habit of such encouragement for themselves.

### B. Exhortation (v. 2)

#### 2. I will praise the LORD all my life; I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

Here the psalmist responded to his own exhortation with a commitment to praising *the Lord* for the entirety of his life. The two sentences in this verse are parallel to one another, and their points are essentially the same. The repetition of two thoughts that are nearly equivalent in meaning creates emphasis. This technique is found frequently in Hebrew poetry.

The speaker has expressed a full and firm commitment to glorifying the name of *God* for as long as he lives (contrast [Psalms 6:5](#); [30:9](#); etc.) This commitment will find fulfillment not only in discourse ([146:2a](#)) but also in song ([146:2b](#)). That distinction may imply praise both in conversation and in worship settings, encompassing all of life.

### What Do You Think?

What benefit is there in deciding to praise God for your entire life, even without knowing what will happen?

### Digging Deeper

How can you strengthen praise habits now that will allow you to keep this lifelong commitment?

## II. Trust (Psalm 146:3–10)

### A. Misplaced in Princes (vv. 3–4)

#### 3. Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save.

The speaker shifts focus to warn against placing one's *trust in* human leaders. While this shift is initially unexpected, it makes considerably more sense when read in light of the psalmist's expression of commitment to praising God in the previous verse. Israel and Judah were tempted at various points to make alliances with pagan nations rather than trusting in God. This legacy of infidelity eventually led to the fall of both the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah (2 Kings 18:11–12; 24:20).

Human leaders ultimately cannot provide true and lasting help. Even though life's circumstances can make trusting God difficult, the psalmist urged his readers to commit to affirming God's goodness by praising him alone through it all.

#### 4. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.

The reason why one should not put trust in humans (Psalm 146:3, above) is because people are not only powerless but transitory (see also Psalm 118:8–9). Our earthly lives have an ultimate limit in death. And when we die, any outstanding goals we have die with us. We are no longer able to affect the land of the living directly; only the indirect effects of our legacies remain to influence others. Thus, any mortal is unworthy of the kind of trust that others often place in them. Death is the ultimate example of the frailty of human beings (Ecclesiastes 7:1–2). The rest of the psalm picks up this point of contrast between mortal, powerless human beings and the powerful, immortal, and merciful God.

### What Do You Think?

What experience do you have of trusting a person instead of God?

### Digging Deeper

Can this experience help you minister to someone who has been betrayed by someone they trusted? Explain.

### B. Perfectly Placed in God (vv. 5–10)

**5. Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God.**

This verse returns to the one in whom trust should really be placed: *the Lord*. Jacob is singled out here among the patriarchs (see [Exodus 3:15](#)). The probable reason is that *Jacob* here refers to Israel, the collective name for God's people ([Genesis 32:28](#); [35:10](#); [Exodus 1:1, 7](#); etc.). The expression emphasizes God's special care for Jacob the individual in particular, then for his descendants by extension. Just as God cared for the man Jacob, so the person who calls on *the God of Jacob* for help is *blessed*. This trust stands in contrast to the misplaced faith in human beings ([Psalm 146:3](#), above).

**6a. He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—**

Here the psalm shifts to highlight some of God's acts and characteristics that make him worthy of trust and praise. God's role as creator of the entire cosmos and all its occupants ([Genesis 1](#)) shows how infinitely powerful he is (compare [Job 38–41](#)). Similar appeals to God's creative might as justification for hope and trust can be found in [Psalms 115:15](#); [121:2](#); [124:8](#); and [134:3](#). In fact, when the people of Judah returned from exile, they and their leaders likewise confessed their sins to God and referred to God's creation of the universe in their praises to him ([Nehemiah 9:1–6](#)).

*The sea* sometimes serves as a metaphor for chaos in the Old Testament (examples: [Psalms 74:13–15](#); [89:9](#); [Jonah 2:2–6](#)), and some ancient peoples believed that the chaotic sea predated the existence of the gods (compare [Genesis 1:2](#)). The psalmist asserts that God not only precedes the sea but created it, which speaks highly of God's great power over even the chaos it represented.

**What Do You Think?**

What aspects of creation give you confidence regarding God's faithfulness?

**Digging Deeper**

Beyond offering praise, how do you express your thankfulness for God's natural gifts?

**6b. he remains faithful forever.**

Here the psalmist introduces the next major set of reasons to trust in and praise God: his faithfulness. The claim that God *remains faithful forever* refers to God's constant loyalty to his people. The speaker does not switch topics here; God's faithfulness is rooted in his role as the creator of the cosmos. The link between God's fidelity and his role as creator was established in Genesis. After the flood waters receded, God made a covenant with humanity and all other living creatures, promising that he would never again destroy the world as he had before ([Genesis 8:21–22](#); [9:9–17](#)).

**7a. He upholds the cause of the oppressed**

God's care for *the oppressed* would have surprised many in the ancient context, as financial prosperity was often seen as a sign of divine favor. While God has sometimes blessed his people materially (examples: [Genesis 24:35](#); [1 Kings 3:10–14](#)), a lack of means is not necessarily a sign of divine disfavor, although it could be (example: [Haggai 1:1–11](#)). Even so, the psalmist notes that God pays special attention to those who don't have enough (examples: [Leviticus 19:10](#); [25:35](#); [Deuteronomy 15:7–11](#); [Isaiah 58:6–12](#); [Ezekiel 18:5–17](#)). We can also point to Jesus' identification with these groups (see [Psalm 146:7b–8a](#), below) in his teaching on judgment ([Matthew 25:37–45](#)) and in his own summary of his earthly ministry (see [Luke 4:16–20](#), as quoting [Isaiah 61:1–2](#)).

We do well to note that asserting a particular care for the oppressed does not suggest God’s lack of concern toward non-oppressed people or even oppressors themselves. After all, his care falls on everyone regardless of one’s standing (examples: [Leviticus 19:15](#); [Matthew 5:45](#)).

**7b–8a. and gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets prisoners free, the LORD gives sight to the blind, the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,**

One category of the oppressed are *the hungry*, pointing to a lack of necessities. The next three phrases should be read in parallel. The reference to opening *blind* eyes is most likely a metaphor for freeing *prisoners*, and the state of being *bowed down* is also associated with imprisonment ([Isaiah 61:1–2](#)).

**8b–9a. the LORD loves the righteous. The LORD watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow,**

These phrases highlight persons for whom God has a special concern. The first are *the righteous*, whom the text specifically identifies as those whom God loves. The second are *the foreigner*. God’s special concern for the plight of the alien is illustrated in the Pentateuch (also called the Torah, the first five books of the Bible), as multiple laws demand the fair and generous treatment of those who are not part of the people of Israel ([Exodus 23:9](#); [Leviticus 19:34](#); [Deuteronomy 1:16](#); [24:14](#)).

The third highlights God’s special care for *the fatherless and the widow*, also emphasized in the Torah (examples: [Exodus 22:22–24](#); [Deuteronomy 10:18](#); [27:19](#)), wisdom literature (examples: [Psalms 10:14](#), [18](#); [68:5](#); [Proverbs 15:25](#)), and the prophets (example: [Isaiah 1:17](#); [Jeremiah 22:3](#); [Malachi 3:5](#)). Indeed, [James 1:27](#) affirms that God considers care for widows and orphans as a defining component of “pure” and “faultless” religious faith.

#### What Do You Think?

What is our responsibility toward people like those named in verses 7–9?

#### Digging Deeper

How is your church working to address needs within your community?

## Global Help

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is a shining example of an organization that works tirelessly to champion the cause of the oppressed in times of conflict and disaster. With a global reach, it provides aid and assistance to those in need, especially in vulnerable communities. The organization offers essential services such as health care, education, and protection to those most in need. The IRC also provides people with the tools and resources to build better futures for themselves and their families. They empower individuals with vocational training, financial assistance, and other resources to create sustainable livelihoods.

The work of the IRC reminds us of the potential to make a positive difference in the world by helping those in need. But ultimately, this work is God’s; his concern is global, and his help is available to all. How does your own work reflect God’s heart for caring for “the least of these” ([Matthew 25:40](#))?

—O. P.

**9b. but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.**

In looking after the righteous, the alien, the widows, and the orphans, God specifically acts against the designs and interests of *the wicked*. This is an example of what is called “antithetical parallelism.” This feature of Hebrew poetry supports the point of the second thought (the half-verse before us) from the opposite perspective of the first thought (in the half-verse before this one).

**10. The LORD reigns forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD.**

In contrast to human leaders, God *reigns forever*. This eternity, coupled with his creative power, means that God is able to do anything he desires. And this God is the God of Zion, the name for the hill upon which Jerusalem was built (see [2 Samuel 5:6–7](#)). By invoking the name *Zion*, the psalmist calls the readers’ attention to the fact that their God chose to place his glory in Jerusalem ([1 Kings 8:1–11](#)). With that reminder, the psalm concludes with a final exhortation to *praise the Lord*.

### III. Exhortation

#### (Psalm 150:1–6)

##### A. Where (v. 1)

**1. Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.**

[Psalm 150](#) also opens with the exhortation *praise the Lord* (see [Lesson Context](#); [Psalm 146:1](#) [above]). But right away, we are confronted with an interpretive difficulty: Do the next two exhortations speak of where God is or where the person doing the praising is to be? We need to look for clues.

The precise location of God’s *sanctuary* and its proximity to *his mighty heavens* is debated (compare [Psalm 11:4](#)). The sanctuary could refer to the temple in Jerusalem (example: [1 Chronicles 9:28–29](#)) or to God’s heavenly home (example: “holy dwelling” in [Psalm 68:4–5](#)). The parallelism of the verses and the reference to the heavens may support the celestial sanctuary (examples: [Isaiah 6:1–4](#); [Revelation 5](#)). It is also possible, however, that the verse calls for worship in both earthly and heavenly realms. In that case, the psalmist would have envisioned the entire universe gathering to praise God (compare [Psalms 96; 148](#)).

##### B. Why (v. 2)

**2. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness.**

Any discussion of God, whether concerning the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, will essentially deal with (or presuppose conclusions to) two issues: *who God is* (in his nature and essence) and *what God has done* (in his acts of creating, ruling, and redeeming). To *praise him for his acts of power* honors God in terms of what he has done; to *praise him for his surpassing greatness* is to honor him in terms of his essential being and character. General references to God’s “mighty acts” can also be found in [Psalms 106:2; 145:4, 12](#); etc., with content expounded in texts such as [Psalm 136](#).

##### C. How (vv. 3–5)



### 3. Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre,

The next three verses identify the various instruments that the psalmist envisioned being used to praise God. These instruments are taken both from the religious rites of the priests and prophets and from the realm of the laity, which implies that every form of music should be mustered to glorify God.

The first instrument mentioned is the priestly ram's horn *trumpet*, called the *shofar*. These were used in worship ([Leviticus 25:9](#)), as a signal in war ([Joshua 6:4–9, 20](#)), to warn of danger ([Joel 2:1](#)), to express joyous celebration ([2 Samuel 6:15](#)), to herald news ([1 Samuel 13:3](#)), at the installation of a king ([1 Kings 1:34](#)), and to call to assembly ([Jeremiah 4:5](#)).

The *harp and lyre* were stringed instruments mentioned together seven times in the psalms (here and in [Psalms 33:2; 57:8; 71:22; 81:2; 92:3; 108:2](#)). They were also used by the prophets in their ministering ([1 Samuel 10:5; 1 Chronicles 25:1, 6](#)), and David famously played such an instrument for Saul to drive away the spirit that afflicted him ([1 Samuel 16:23](#)).

### 4. praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe,

The *timbrel* is similar to a modern tambourine, being small enough to be held in the hand. The use of this rhythm percussion instrument is associated with dances of joy several times in the Old Testament (examples: [Exodus 15:20; Psalm 149:3](#)), even joy that has the wrong focus ([Isaiah 5:11–12](#)).

The term *strings* likely refers collectively the various kinds of such instruments rather than a third type. The *pipe* could refer to collectively to various kinds of wind instruments but distinct from horns.

### 5. praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals.

The percussion section is mentioned in this verse. It is possible that two different instruments are in view here. Alternatively, the same instrument may have been used in different ways. Regardless of the exact items to which the text refers, the idea is that those present to praise God should make loud and joyful noises.

## D. Who (v. 6)

### 6. Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD.

The psalm concludes by identifying the persons who should praise God. *Everything that has breath* could refer to human beings, specifically, into whom God breathed “the breath of life” ([Genesis 2:7](#)). However, animals are also said to possess “the breath of life” ([7:15](#)). Consequently, it seems likely that the psalmist has invited all creation to participate in praising the Creator (compare [Psalms 69:34; 103:22; 148:1–10](#)).

## What Sound?

When my niece was about three, a favorite pastime of mine was to ask her what sounds different animals make. Some of these were quite easy for her—a cat, a dog, a rooster. But when I asked, for instance, how a bunny or a fish sounds, she would grow quite serious. Sometimes she would remain silent in her contemplation, and sometimes she'd vocalize something off-the-wall just to make us both laugh.

Imagine all the animal sounds we can mimic—and all those we don't even know—joining in with

our human worship. That is the call of **Psalm 150**: to praise unabashedly. What a sound when *all* of creation joins in his praise!

—J. A. K.

### What Do You Think?

How does it feel to assume that all of creation is praising God around you?

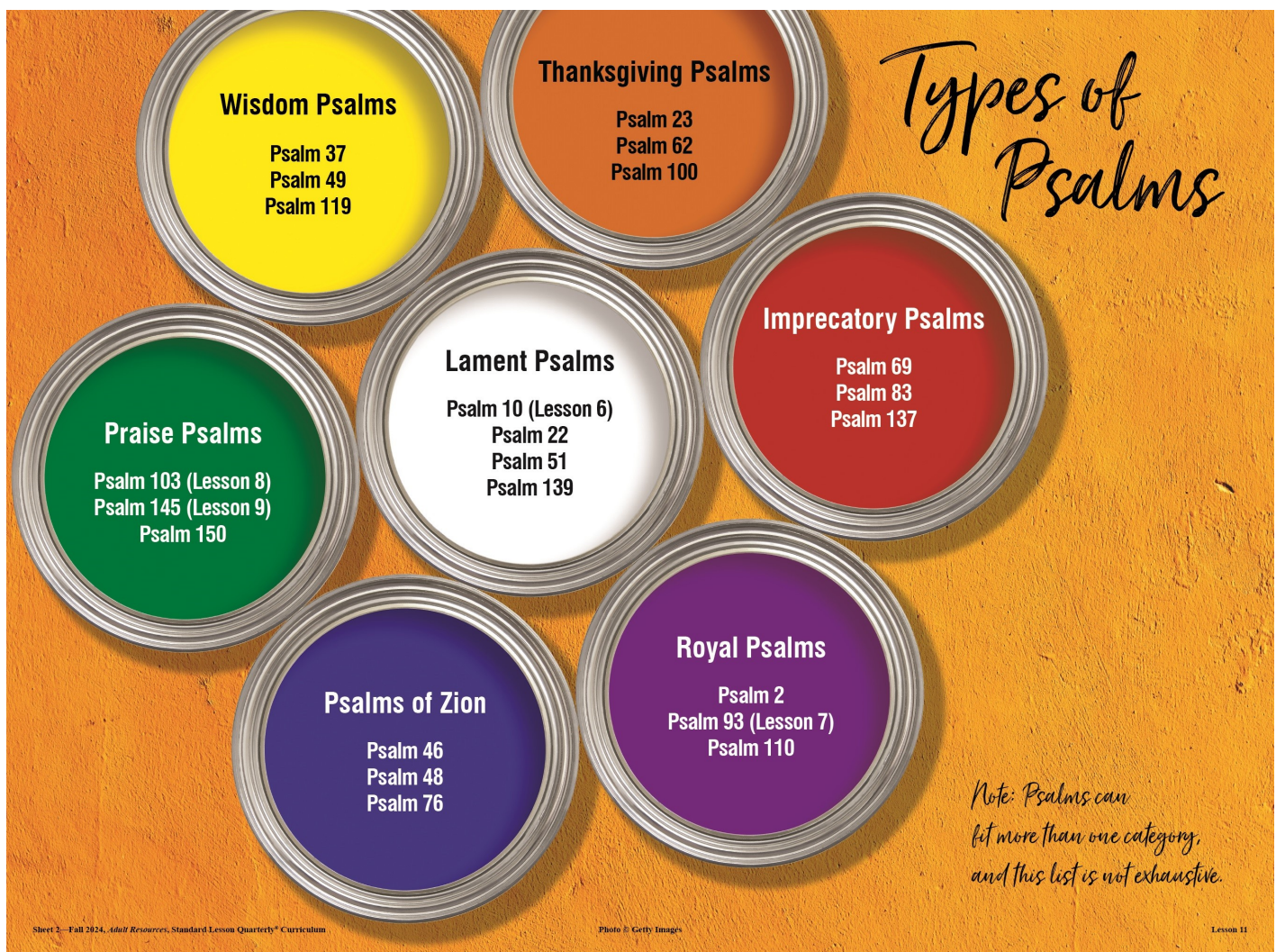
### Digging Deeper

What opportunities outside of weekly worship services do you have to join in praising the Lord of creation?

## Conclusion

### A. Praise Your Heavenly Father

I was eager to praise my earthly father. I saw all that he did for me and how he cared for me, and I always looked up to him. Many of you likely can relate to that.



Visual for [Lesson 11](#). Briefly go over this chart while discussing the [Lesson Context](#); it can be used to review psalms from previous lessons.

But we often fail to praise our Heavenly Father the same way. We take his blessings for granted, as though these were given to us by nature rather than a loving God. We brag about what someone has done for us, but we never share with others the ways that God shows his mercy toward us. In fact, we are prone to grumbling and complaining about how difficult the circumstances of life can be.

[Psalms 146](#) and [150](#) exhort us to praise God for all the great deeds he has done and continues to do for us. When we gather together in praise of our heavenly Father, we not only align ourselves with the admonitions of Scripture, but we also grow in our intimacy with God and with other believers. Moreover, when we remind ourselves of and meditate on God's gracious acts on our behalf, we grow in our gratitude toward God and our resistance to grumbling. We can come to appreciate God's blessings more and find joy in our lives even in (or especially in) difficult circumstances.

### **B. Prayer**

Heavenly Father, remind us daily of all your mercies to us. Fill our hearts with gratitude and our mouths with your praise. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### **C. Thought to Remember**

God deserves our praise.

## **Involvement Learning**

Enhance your lesson with [NIV Bible Student](#) (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at [www.standardlesson.com](http://www.standardlesson.com) or in the back of the [NIV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition](#)).

### **Into the Lesson**

Begin today's session by reading each of the following statements to your class. Poll the class after each statement to see how many agree with it and how many disagree. *Option.* You may want to display these or distribute them on a handout (you create).

1. Too much praise will keep a child from reaching his or her full potential.
2. The most praiseworthy person in my life has also been the most influential.
3. I can praise you without diminishing myself.
4. There aren't many situations or people in my life really deserving of praise.

Divide the class into groups of two or three. Ask class members to choose one of the statements

and to explain to their partner(s) why they agree or disagree with it.

After a few minutes for discussion, tell the class, “Today’s lesson is all about praise we can always feel good about: praise to God our Father. The psalmist was effusive with his praise. Let’s open our Bibles to discover why.”

## Into the Word

Ask each group from the previous exercise to combine with one other group. In these new groups, class members should examine [Psalms 146](#) and [150](#) to complete a handout of a chart (you create) with the following headings: *Chapter and Verse*, *Why Praise?*, and *How to Praise?*, noting for each section from the texts why and/or how the psalmist encourages praise.

*Option.* Ask some or all the groups to list the praiseworthy actions of God they find in [Psalm 146](#). Besides each one, they should jot down ways they see God doing these things in our world today. If they have time, groups could do internet research to discover ministries or other agencies through whom God is working to accomplish each one.

Give the class six to eight minutes to work in groups before calling them together for an all-class discussion of the psalms, reviewing their group findings and conclusions.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of the “Words About Praise” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Allow learners to work in pairs to complete as instructed.

## Into Life

Challenge class members to identify their own personal reasons to praise God from the list of reasons they compiled in their Bible study. Tell them to write or circle the encouragements to praise that mean the most to them. Then, in their groups, they can share what they’ve chosen and why.

Encourage individuals to write a brief praise prayer of a few words or one or two sentences and to share what they’ve written with the group. Then each group should choose one of the prayers for the whole class to hear. Close today’s session with a prayer made up of these praises read aloud by those who wrote them.

*Option.* Point some or all of your groups specifically to [Psalm 146:7–9](#) and challenge them to brainstorm ways God could use class members to do each praiseworthy work. Ask them to consider how God would be praised by each idea they mention.

*Alternative.* Distribute copies of “Chronicle of Praise” exercise from the activity page. Encourage learners to complete the chart in their personal times with God each day in the coming week. (You may want to make time in next week’s session for members to share any insights or conclusions that came to them because they completed this activity.)

In your closing prayer time, include prayers for God’s help in pursuing their ideas in the coming days.

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To print the reproducible activity page, simply click the highlighted text below to create a pdf file on your hard drive. Then open the pdf file in Acrobat Reader and print.

[Activity Page \(November 10—Songs of Praise\)](#)

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